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The Grand Alliance leaders – Churchill, Truman, Stalin – at the conference Potsdam; 1945

Recent Writings of Revolutionary Democracy on the British Road to Socialism

Introduction

The overall research programme of the Indian journal - *Revolutionary Democracy* (RD) - has been valuable to the Marxist-Leninist movement. This research programme can be summarized as unearthing hitherto unpublished articles and letters of Stalin, and of the workers movement. This is an important and major endeavour. Through their relationship with several sources within the former USSR, the editors have brought several new writings to the movement.

We focus here upon a recent compilation of documents from the Soviet Archives, and an editorial from *Revolutionary Democracy*. Both these archival documents and editorial, concern the British Communist Party (CP). The archival documents in question, focus on the British Programme to be adopted in 1950.

While caution must continue on the veracity of documents emerging from 'the archives', the Editor of RD, Vijay Singh, appears to have ensured the highest standards in selecting documents. These documents provoke several questions for the Marxist-Leninist movement. We believe, that in all likelihood these documents are not forgeries lurking in the archives. Nonetheless, how such data are to be interpreted, is obviously subject to discussion.

The report here, contains the following sections:

1. An introduction: The State of the British Communist Party in 1950 and Stalin's Advice
2. A reprint of two pieces from *Revolutionary Democracy*. The first; consists of 17 pages, in 6 documents, from the RGASPI (The Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History); and the second is an editorial by Vijay Singh.

3. A response by Hari Kumar to *Revolutionary Democracy*.
4. A response by Garbis Altinoglu to *Revolutionary Democracy*.

1. The state of the British Communist Party in 1950 and Stalin's advice.

By Hari Kumar

Until 1943, the pro-USSR communists in Britain, were known as the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB). After 1943, the party adopted the name of 'The Communist Party (CP)', but it is often still referred to as the CPGB.

Harry Pollitt (1890-1960) was listed from 1923, as one of the 17 member executive committee of the CPGB. In 1929 he was elected General Secretary, and he held this post until 1956 – bar an interruption prior to the Second World War (1929-39 and 1941-56). The communists of the CP were pitted against the social democrats of the British Labour Party (LP), for the allegiance and support of the British working class. Largely, the LP was dominant:

“By the summer of 1939, the Labour party was the chief force on the British left, and the much smaller Communist party its only conceivable rival. Labour... it remained much stronger than its rival, having formed two minority governments in the 1920s whereas the CPGB had never had more than two MPs at the same time. In 1939, Labour had more than 150 MPs to the Communists' one, over 400,000 individual members as opposed to their 18,000, and the affiliation of almost all the major trade unions in the country as opposed to the limited, though in some cases growing, degree of influence in a handful of unions that the Communists could boast.”

Andrew Thorpe; "Locking out the Communists: The Labour party and the Communist party, 1939–46"; Twentieth Century British History, Vol. 25, No. 2, 2014, pp. 221–250.

At various times, the CPGB attempted to affiliate with the LP. This was not the case during the revisionist ultra-leftist period known as the Third Period, or, the 'class against class' strategic period. Several attempts at affiliation were defeated by votes of the LP annual conference. These generally followed demagogic attacks by the social-democratic leaders. In 1936:

“Labour's annual conference defeated, by a four-to-one majority, a motion calling for Communist affiliation to the Labour party...”

Thorpe 2014; Ibid.

But the CPGB, correctly – persisted in trying to affiliate. A further Conference vote on affiliation came in 1943, in the middle of the Second World War. Much red-baiting continued, with the usual allegations that the CPGB were stooges for Moscow. Since the Comintern served as a 'bogie' for this slander, it was often mentioned. However a month prior to the vote, on 15 May 1943, the Comintern was dissolved.

After the great victory of Stalingrad the tide of the war now favoured the USSR. Therefore, at this time, Stalin did not oppose the dissolution of the Comintern. It seems one intent was to allay the anxiety of the Western bourgeoisie, about their country's communist parties. Answering a question on the subject from Reuter's Moscow correspondent, Harold King, Stalin said:

The dissolution of the Communist International is proper and timely... it facilitates the work of patriots of all countries for unifying freedom-loving peoples into a single international camp for the fight against the menace of world domination by Hitlerism.

J.V. Stalin: 'The Dissolution of the Communist International -Answer to Reuter's Correspondent, May 28, 1943', in: 'War Speeches, Orders of the Day, and Answers to Press Correspondents during the Great Patriotic War: July 3rd, 1941-June 22nd, 1945'; London; 1956; p. 66

However, the dissolution did not alter the results of the 1943 LP vote, which again rejected the CPGB bid for affiliation. The social democrat leadership, in particular Herbert Morrison (Home Secretary and Minister for Home Security in the National cabinet at the time), ensured this. The proposal was defeated by 1,951,000 votes to 712,000. This vote was despite the prestige of the USSR, which reflected onto the British CPGB. That same prestige of the USSR, had enabled the CP to grow to its peak membership, to 56,000 in 1942 (Thorpe A 2014; Ibid).

By April 1946 the membership numbered 42,123 (*Andrew Thorpe, "The Membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1920-1945; The Historical Journal, Vol. 43, No. 3 (Sep., 2000), pp. 777-800*). In comparison to other European parties, the British CP was smaller (The French CP 800,000 members and the Italian CP 1.7 million). Another vote on affiliation of the CP to the LP, was taken in 1946 – and again rejected.

After the Comintern dissolution, almost immediately two important Communist Parties lapsed into open revisionism. In 1944, the leader of the Communist Party of the United States of America, Earl Browder, initiated the adoption by the Party of a totally revisionist programme. He presented the agreement between the Soviet Union and the Western imperialist powers at Teheran as an indication that interclass antagonisms had been eliminated, and that American capitalism could be peacefully transformed into socialism by class collaboration through the institutions of "American democracy". Browder further put forward the view that:

...the two-party system provides adequate channels for the basic democratic rights,

Earl Browder, in: Philip J. Jaffe: 'The Rise and Fall of Earl Browder', in: 'Survey', Volume 18, No. 2 (Spring 1972); p. 50.

Browder argued that the existence of the Communist Party had become an obstacle to national unity.

Under Browder's leadership, the 10th Convention of the CPUSA in May 1944 dissolved the Party and reconstituted it as the 'Communist Political Association', the aim of which was to carry on 'political education' to make the public understand that the peaceful transition to 'socialism', through the nationalisation of monopolistic enterprises, was socially desirable. The CPA's constitution states:

"The Communist Political Association is a non-party organisation of Americans which... carries forward the tradition of Washington, Jefferson, Paine, Jackson and Lincoln...

It looks to the family of free nations, led by the great coalition of democratic capitalist and socialist states, to inaugurate an era of world peace, expanding production and economic well-being".

Communist Political Association: Constitution, in: Philip J. Jaffe: ibid.; p. 51.

In the April 1945 issue of 'Cahiers du Communisme' (Notebooks of Communism), the theoretical journal of the French Communist Party published 'On the Dissolution of the Communist Party of the USA', an article attributed to the leading French communist Jacques Duclos. This was highly critical of Browderism. His main criticism was:

"Earl Browder declared, in effect, that at Teheran capitalism and socialism had begun to find the means of peaceful . . . collaboration in the framework of one and the same world. . . . Earl Browder drew political conclusions . . . that the, principal problems of internal politics of the US must in future be solved exclusively by means of reforms, for the expectation of unlimited inner conflict threatens also the perspective of international unity held forth at Tehran".

Jacques Duclos: 'On the Dissolution of the Communist Party of the USA', in: Philip J. Jaffe: ibid.; p. 53.

Thus, charged the article, Browder had distorted the meaning of the Teheran declaration:

"...into a political platform for class peace in the United States".

Jacques Duclos: ibid., p. 53.

The article dismissed Browder's claim that nationalisation of monopolies was equivalent to socialism:

"Nationalisation of monopolies actually in no sense constitutes a socialist achievement... It is not simply a matter of reforms of a democratic character, achievement of socialism being impossible to imagine without a preliminary conquest of power".

Jacques Duclos: ibid.; p. 54.

Finally, the article strongly criticised the dissolution of the Communist Party:

"Earl Browder proposed to name the new organisation 'Communist Political Association' which, in the traditional American two-party system, will not intervene as a 'party', that is, it will not propose candidates in the elections . . . but will work to assemble a broad progressive and democratic movement within all parties".

Jacques Duclos: ibid.; p. 53.

Although the article bore Duclos's signature, it is likely it was written in Moscow, almost certainly under the guidance of Andrey Zhdanov:

It is...clearly evident that the so-called 'Duclos article'; could not have been written in France, but was written in Moscow, probably under the guidance of Andrey Zhdanov.

Philip A. Jaffe: op. cit; p. 59.

It is not yet established that Zhdanov truly did prompt the 'Duclos Article. Assuming it is, it raises some questions, and especially in regards to the timing of Stalin's approval of Pollitt's draft of the CPGB programme in 1950. This is for the following events of 1945.

Following the circulation of the 'Duclos Letter', at a Special Emergency Convention of the CPA on 26-28 July 1945, a resolution was adopted to reconstitute the CPUSA, headed by a temporary Secretariat. In February 1946 Browder was expelled from the reconstituted party and in July 1946 Eugene Dennis* was elected General Secretary.

In May 1945, before the appearance of the 'Duclos' letter, the leader of the Communist Party of Great Britain, Harry Pollitt, had rushed to jump on the Browder bandwagon and embrace state capitalism:

State capitalism can mean that the sectional interests of the capitalists are to some extent subordinated to the needs of the whole (which include... the workers)...

The conditions created by the great political changes arising out of this war are now objectively more favourable for the peaceful transition to socialism than they have ever been...

There is, up to a point, a common interest between all the progressive sections of the nation, labour and capitalist alike.

Harry Pollitt: 'Answers to Questions' (May 1945); London, 1945; p. 30, 39, 44.

Following publication of the 'Duclos' letter, the pamphlet was withdrawn.

Yet, as the archival papers reprinted by RD show, thereafter in 1950 – Stalin himself advises Harry Pollitt to adopt very similar approaches to those that the Cominform had attacked. Herein on, we follow the texts of the archival materials provided by *Revolutionary Democracy*.

Pollitt sent a letter to J.V.Stalin dated 23rd May 1950, asking for:

...advice on the tactics of the Communist Party during the coming elections to the Parliament that in his opinion may take place during the fall of the current year.

Presumably, Stalin asked for a meeting with Pollitt himself, which took place on the 31st May 1950, and lasted one hour and 20 minutes. Stalin endorsed Pollitt's general approach to the coming elections, but probed for precise information about the 1945 and 1950 general elections.

Again, the papers reprinted by RD, and the editorial by RD, do not explain what changed so dramatically after 1945.

In the 1945 elections, the CPGB obtained 103,000 votes, and two members of parliament (Willie Gallacher and Phil Piratin). Both lost their seats in the 1950 election. In 1943, the highest membership was recorded of 60,000. Even this remained below the level of European parties where the French CP had 800,000 members and the Italian CP had 1.7 million. The 1945 parliamentary election had been unexpectedly won by the Labour Party.

Stalin understands why this happened. In 1945 – after the British election – Churchill

launched the attack upon the USSR and the People's Democracies. In his response, Stalin outlines the reaction of the "plain" people to the USSR:

Mr. Churchill in his speeches sometimes recalls the plain people from little homes, slapping them patronisingly on the back and parading as their friend. But these people are not so simple as may at first sight appear. These plain people have views of their own, a policy of their own, and they know how to stand up for themselves. It was they, the millions of these plain people, that defeated Mr. Churchill and his party in Britain by casting their votes for the Labourites. It was they, the millions of these "plain people," who isolated the reactionaries and advocates of collaboration with Fascism in Europe, and gave their preference to the Left democratic parties. It was they, the millions of these "plain people," who after testing the Communists in the fires of struggle and resistance to Fascism, came to the conclusion that the Communists were fully deserving of the people's confidence. That was how the influence of the Communists grew in Europe.

However, in his meeting with Pollitt, Stalin also noted the large Conservative party vote in the next election of 1950. He asked why this had occurred. Pollitt answers that in the 1945 election, the LP attracted many of the "middle classes". They were lost to the LP in the 1950 elections. This was due to rationing, in particular, of benzene. Stalin asks about the current mood of the British working class, Pollitt replied that English workers see "no sense in voting for the communists" as they have "no chance of coming to power":

...the English workers obsessed by the danger of Conservatives coming to power, do not vote for the Communists as they do not want a division of votes of those candidates who are inclined against the Conservatives. English workers think that there is no sense in voting for the English Communists as the English Communists have no chance of coming to power.

Stalin states the CPGB needs to counter Labour plans on nationalization, upon which the CP has been "very soft and completely unprincipled":

Comrade Stalin states that as he thinks, the Communist Party of England takes a very soft and completely unprincipled position in the struggle against the Labour Party. The English Communists should have told the Labourites that they, the Labourites, are not at all Socialist but the left wing of the Conservative Party. This is not done. This needs to be openly pronounced. English Communists must state that under the Labour government the capitalists feel very fine, that their profits grow. This one fact speaks out that the Labourites are building no socialism.

Stalin advises a long-term programme to "increase the number of supporters". Moreover, Stalin identifies that it was premature to be aiming at "establishing Soviet power in England":

English Communists are accused in England that they have put before themselves the aim of establishing Soviet power in England. The English Communists must respond to this in their Programme that they do not want to weaken the Parliament, that England shall reach socialism through its own path and not through the path traversed by Soviet power but through a democratic republic that shall be guided not by capitalists but by representatives of peoples'

power i.e. a coalition of workers, working intelligentsia, lower classes of the cities as well as farmers. Communists must declare that this power shall act through the Parliament.

Instead of a "Soviet Path", the path should be that of a "People's Democratic" path:

Comrade Stalin said that the talk should be of a Peoples' Democratic path for the movement of England to Socialism and not of the Soviet path but of that path on which the countries of Peoples' Democracy are moving towards socialism.

Another substantive point raised by Stalin, was the attitude to the British colonies and its peoples. He believes "the English Communists are shying away from these questions". Stalin advises:

He, Comrade Stalin, is convinced that the British Communists not only should not destroy Britain but must strengthen it on its own basis, putting to an end the present abnormal mutual relations between peoples that are now under the British Empire.

In the closing part of the meeting, the issue of "peace" is raised. In context, it obviously implies there should be no war threats directed at the USSR and its ring of allies in the People's Democracies:

Pollitt asks if it will be proper for the CP to give first place to the struggle for peace in its election campaign.

Comrade Stalin answers that it will be proper in so far as the discussion is about foreign policy. Besides this, in the field of internal affairs they should speak out for the improvement in the living conditions of the working class...

Comrade Stalin said that it would be good if the English people supported the efforts of the Soviet government for the protection of peace."

Thereafter a draft programme, after Politt confers with his party leadership – is sent for Stalin's approval. In the 4th document (dated 28th September 1950) Stalin responded to Pollitt in a letter. Stalin had two significant criticisms and further advice. One major criticism was that the British communists were "half-hearted" in their criticism of the Labour Party:

A half-hearted criticism of the politics of the leadership of the Labour Party is a serious shortcoming of the document. Criticism of the Labourites in the draft programme is timid and insufficiently concrete. The English Communists in the programme of their party should openly say that the Labourites are not at all socialists but in fact are the left-wing of the Conservative Party.

In addition Stalin urges the British CP to be more forthright in calling to transform relations with the peoples of the British colonies on the basis of "a new democratic foundation" "friendship... on the basis of equality.

Perhaps the most important point of this reply, is Stalin's overall approval of the draft programme's depiction of the relationship of the Communists to Parliament. Communists

are “not going to delegitimise Parliament”, “England shall come to socialism through its own path and not through Soviet power but through People’s Democracy”:

The draft of the programme correctly puts forward the task of utilising the traditional English institutions (Parliament) in the struggle for socialism. It is well known that the English Communists are being accused that they will establish Soviet Power in England. Hence it is imperative that in the draft of the programme it should be very clearly and definitely stated that the English Communists are not going to delegitimise Parliament, that England shall come to socialism through its own path and not through Soviet Power, but through Peoples’ Democracy that would be guided by peoples’ power and not by capitalists; peoples’ power representing a coalition of working class as the leading force of the coalition, working intelligentsia, small and middle strata of the cities as well as farmers. The Communists must declare that this power shall act through the Parliament. The programme must underline that only this given coalition can provide to the English people peace, higher wages, and raw material for English industry and markets for English products. The Programme must talk about Peoples’ Democracy as the path for the movement of England toward the path to Socialism, the path on which the countries of Peoples’ Democracy are moving towards socialism.

In the **5th Document**, a letter from Pollitt, acknowledges that Stalin’s critique was fully incorporated into revisions. Finally, the 6th substantive document records a further meeting between Stalin and Pollitt”, on the 5th January 1951. There are three substantive points in this meeting.

One hinges upon nationalisation, which Stalin feels is not “put forward clearly enough”. He suggest that the nationalization steps be accompanied with:

...partial compensation for those property holders who shall have loyal relationship with the people’s government but denying compensation to those owners of nationalised property who shall resist the people’s government.

Also on nationalisation, Stalin corrects the draft’s characterisation of China as having achieved “People’s Democracy”:

The People’s Republic of China has not yet reached the stage of People’s Democracy. In China the national bourgeoisie yet remains untouched; nationalisation has encompassed only the property of the Japanese. The Chinese think it to be correct that for the present they have not touched the national bourgeoisie.

Finally, Stalin advised a “forewarning” to the British people for “self-defence” against capitalist efforts to resist expropriation:

Comrade Stalin says that it would have been proper to forewarn the English people in the Programme that the capitalists shall not voluntarily give up their property and their disproportionate profits for the benefit of the English people. It would be more proper to propose that they shall actively resist the decisions of the people’s Parliament and shall fight with all means for the preservation of their privileges including the use of force. This is why the English people and the

people's government should be ready in self-defence to give a befitting reply to such attempts. This should be said in the Programme.

Another major question was whether the draft could serve as an international model. Stalin answers 'yes':

Comrade Stalin answers that the draft has been well prepared and says that the appearance of the Programme of the Communist Party of England occupies a turning point in the history of the working class movement of the Anglo-Saxon countries. This Programme in its essence is a suitable document for the Communist Parties of USA, Canada, Australia and other Anglo-Saxon countries. The Communist Party of the USA at the moment is in a hard situation; they have a lot of confusion.

As noted, one question arising from these events, is why had the general strategy for the CPGB changed from 1945, to that being offered in advice the Pollitt in 1950?

(2) Materials from Revolutionary Democracy.

2a) The Archival Papers, as printed in Revolutionary Democracy Reprint One: Consisting of files from RAGSPI

At: <https://www.revolutionarydemocracy.org/rdv13n2/britroad.htm>
'On the British Road to Socialism'

J.V. Stalin

Copy

Top Secret

To Comrade Stalin

In his letter addressed to you the General Secretary of the CC of the Communist Party of England, Harry Pollitt, who had been to the Soviet Union for treatment, requests advice on the tactics of the Communist Party during the coming elections to the Parliament that in his opinion may take place during the fall of the current year.

H. Pollitt is of the opinion that the basic tactical task of the Communist Party in the coming elections must consist in preventing victory of the Conservatives. H. Pollitt writes that in these elections the Communist Party should somewhat reduce the number of its candidates (in elections conducted during February this year the Communist Party put forward 100 candidates); to recommend to the electors to vote for Labour candidates where the Party has not put forward its candidate and where the leaders of the Labour Party are not contesting. While doing so, a demand shall be put before the Labour Party candidate to support the major demands of the working class movement of England (scrap wage freeze; development of trade with the Soviet Union; prohibition on nuclear weapons etc.)

In connection with the questions raised by H. Pollitt, the Foreign Policy Commission puts forward the suggestion to direct Com. Suslov to receive H. Pollitt and put before him the following opinion of the CC AUCP (b) regarding the questions touched upon by him in his letter:

(a) In case of elections for the Parliament during the fall of 1950 it would be imperative

for the CP to widely explain, as in her pre-election Programme so also during the entire conduct of the election campaign, that there is no substantial difference between the politics of the Labour and of the Conservatives as the politics of this and the other party is directed towards the preparation for a new war, an attack on the living standards of the working class and of all the workforce, putting on the working class the great burden of military expenditure and subordination of the politics of the Labour government to the interests of the American Imperialism. In this context the Communist Party does not support the Labour candidates for Parliament:

(b) The Communist Party must use the Parliament elections for the purpose of carrying out a wide and active struggle for peace, establishing the struggle against the threat of a new war as the foundation of their election platform. Safeguarding peace and the question of the threat of a new war should be closely linked with the struggle for the improvement of the living standards of the workers and other toilers of England, against a freeze on the wages, for the solution of the housing crisis, for equal pay for work among men and women, than during earlier elections.

(c) For the purpose of maintaining the independent line of the CP in the elections and distinguishing it from the programme of the Labour and the Conservative parties, the Communist Party must put forward her own candidates in a number of election constituencies, and in many others but in lesser numbers than in the earlier elections. Communist candidates should also be put forward in those constituencies where the leaders of the Conservative Party and the Labour Party would be standing for election, using the presence of the candidates of the CP for the purpose of the exposing the reactionary essence of the Labour politics.

The Communist Party should pay special attention to those areas where the Communists and other progressive forces have significantly more influence so as to try, even if in a few constituencies, to get the Communist candidates elected to Parliament.

(d) In those constituencies, where the CP shall not put forward her candidates, she should announce its support to Labour candidates under conditions that the Labour Party expresses commitment to support the Communist candidates to the Parliament. In case of a rejection by the Labour Party of this suggestion of the Communist Party a demand should be put forward on behalf of the electors to the Labour candidates to fight for peace and speak against the dangers of a new war, support the demand for prohibition of nuclear armaments and declaring that government as a war criminal that first uses such arms, for struggle for better relations with the Soviet Union, countries of Peoples' Democracies and Democratic China, to struggle for the improvement of living conditions of the working masses.

If the Labour candidate refuses to accept these suggestions, then one should refuse to support to such a candidate.

(e) The CP should support independent Labourites (Platts-Mills, Pritt etc.) putting before them the demand for the protection of peace, prohibition of atomic armaments, struggle for the betterment of relations with the Soviet Union, improving the living standards of the working people (increase in salaries, betterment of housing conditions, condemnation of the pro-American politics of the ruling circles of England, etc.);

(f) It is necessary to try electoral alliance with grass-root trade unions and cooperative

organisations, and also organisations of the Labour Party for support to the Communist candidates, independent Labourites and also with Labourites who give an undertaking to support democratic demands of the electors;

(g) The most significant condition for the successful conduct of the election campaign for Parliament and for the fulfillment of the most important tasks that stand before the CP of England, is the decisive turn of the party to the carrying out on a wide scale political and organisational work among the masses, strengthening of the struggle against the remnants of reformism, strengthening the links with trade union organisations, decisive reorganisation of work of the primary party organisations and of the party press for the purpose of strengthening and widening of links of the party with the masses.

Request your direction.

Annex. Letter from H. Pollitt.

Chairman of Foreign Political Commission, CC,VCP(b) (Signed) (B.Grigoriyan)

23rd May 1950

Copies sent to

Comrades:

Malenkov

Molotov

Beria

Mikoyan

Kaganovich

Bulganin

No. 25-S-849

RGASPI, Fond 558, Opis 11, Delo 287, Listy 22-24.

Meeting Between Comrades Stalin and H. Pollitt

31st May 1950

Present: Com. Malenkov and Pavlov (Interpreter).

Pollitt says that he had had for the first time met Comrade Stalin 29 years ago, when Comrade Stalin had expressed his wish to meet the future Secretary of the English Communist Party.

Comrade Stalin answers that he remembers this and asks Pollitt what questions he has.

Pollitt says that his questions of interest regarding tactics of the English Communists in the coming elections to Parliament have been sent in detail in his letter addressed to the CC AUCP (b).

Comrade Stalin says that he has received the letter of Pollitt. He, Comrade Stalin, considers the position of Pollitt concerning the tactics of the English Communists for the

coming elections to Parliament as correct. It is necessary, says Comrade Stalin, in so far as possible not to permit a victory of the Conservatives. Certainly the Labour Party is better, though only a little bit better than the Conservatives. However, one should consider that the working class of England considers a Labour government as their government.

Comrade Stalin asks whether the elections have taken place in Dumbarton and whether the Communists had put up any candidate in the elections.

Pollitt answers that the by-elections in Dumbarton have already taken place. The Communist Party did not put forward its candidates in these elections so that there may not be any division of votes that would have permitted the Conservative candidate to get through. The Labourites won the election in Dumbarton.

Comrade Stalin asks would there have been re- elections in case the candidate had received equal votes?

Pollitt answers that re-elections are held in case the candidate elected in the main elections had died. The majority system of elections in England, observes Pollitt is extremely unfavourable for English Communists. The rightist parties in France are at the moment conducting a struggle for the introduction of a similar system in France.

Comrade Stalin says that within the English working class there are taking place certain processes that are seen but which are unnoticeable from the outside, that explain the fact that the Conservatives managed to amass such a large quantity of votes in the last elections.

To illustrate the processes taking place in the English electorate that are not observable for an outside observer, he, Comrade Stalin, could cite the fact that the results of the elections in 1945 in England were unexpected for Churchill and Eden as well as for Attlee and Bevin. Labourites as well as Conservatives have an apparatus, informing the leadership of the party about the mood of the electors. In 1945 Churchill was confident of his victory in the elections, and Attlee did not expect the victory of the Labourites. The information providing apparatus let them down. Apparently in 1945 in the mood of the electors there took place some hidden internal processes, as a result of which the Labourites unexpectedly emerged victorious. And at the present time too something is happening to the mood of the British working class.

Pollitt answers, that in 1945 nobody expected the victory of the Labourites because every worker out of millions of English workers who had lived through the hard years of depression, when the Conservatives were in power, took a decision for themselves that they shall not permit the Conservatives to come to power.

Comrade Stalin comments, that neither the leaders of the Labourites nor the Conservatives could understand this.

Pollitt answers that this happened because the leaders did not continue with the contacts with the masses of the English people. As also, during the war years the working people of England openly talked among themselves in bomb-shelters and in the Metro, where they used to take shelter from bombings that they shall never again permit the Conservatives to come to power.

Comrade Stalin asks – how would Pollitt characterise the mood of the English working class.

Pollitt answers, that the mood of the English working class could be characterised, firstly, a fear of the onslaught of unemployment in England, secondly, fear of war. Such mood is especially widespread among those workers who have not experienced the massive unemployment during the pre-war years.

Comrade Stalin asks – why did the Conservatives get such a large number of votes?

Pollitt answers that the number of votes cast for the Labourites on the last elections in industrial regions of England has grown significantly and on the whole as a party the Labourites got unprecedentedly more votes in the history of England.

Comrade Stalin observes that none the less the Conservatives also got a large number of votes.

Pollitt answers that Labour party got a record number of votes in the last elections. In 1945 the Labourites attracted the middle classes to their side. In 1950 the Labourites lost the support of the middle classes who were not happy with the taxes, rationing of benzene and other steps of the Labour government that hurt the interests of the small shopkeepers. However, the miners, ship-builders, workers in the heavy machine building industry, textile workers, metallurgists, they all together voted for the Labourites. All these sectors of the working class had experienced the years of depression during pre-war days when the Conservatives were in power. Now they think that the Labour government shall save them from the onslaught of a new depression. Similarly, this fact also requires attention that England has millions of voters who are between 25 and 35 years of age. These voters have never known unemployment, have not experienced on their own skin the effects of lock-outs and have not participated in the demonstrations of the unemployed. Their salaries today are higher than ever earlier. To the same one may add that factually at the moment there is no unemployment in England.

Comrade Stalin again asks if at present there is no unemployment in England.

Pollitt answers that the general quantity of unemployed in England at the moment consists of 350 thousand, while the unemployed in the main are the old people. The concentration of unemployed has the following distribution: Liverpool – 40 thousand; South Wales – 35 thousand; Scotland – 50 thousand; all these in the main are old people.

Pollitt says that the English workers obsessed by the danger of Conservatives coming to power, do not vote for the Communists as they do not want a division of votes of those candidates who are inclined against the Conservatives. English workers think that there is no sense in voting for the English Communists as the English Communists have no chance of coming to power.

Comrade Stalin says, in any case in the mood of the electorate certain changes are taking place that favour Conservatives.

Pollitt answers, that taking recourse to all sorts of demagoguery the Conservatives have

organised a strong youth movement.

Comrade Stalin says that certain sections of the English electors have been disillusioned from the Labourites. It is not just chance that the Conservatives got such large number of votes in the last elections.

Pollitt answers that the middle classes have left the Labourites which the Conservatives captured to their side by promising change in a number of limitations including the rationing of benzene. Conservatives were also succeeded in gathering to their side a large number of votes by playing on the mood for peace among the people. As is well known, during the election campaign Churchill made the announcement that in case of the Conservatives being elected he will personally talk to the Soviet leaders. This trick of Churchill put the Labourites in confusion. Bevin very messily replied to this speech of Churchill.

Pollitt said that some workers were influenced by the announcement of the Conservatives that with a more close relationship with the Americans, which they could support after coming to power, the English working class shall be guaranteed against unemployment.

Comrade Stalin says that such a strong union with the Americans, as that of the Labourites, the Conservatives never had. The Labourites are simply subservient to the Americans.

Pollitt says that this is completely true. However, the Conservatives had announced during the last elections that they, if they come to power, would support the union with the Americans on conditions that are less harsh for England. Some electors believed the Conservatives as they thought that Churchill shall not so easily submit to the Americans.

Comrade Stalin asked has the CP of England got its own Programme calculated for a long period.

Pollitt answers that the CP of England has no such Programme.

Comrade Stalin says he would like to know how the English Communists would counter the Labourite plan of nationalisation of industry and the establishment of socialist society. It is important to give direction and an ideal to the English masses. The Labourites are giving a direction to the English masses.

Pollitt answers that the Party Line is given in the brochure entitled '*British Road to Socialism*'. Labourites have their Programme titled '*Labourites Believe in England*' and the Conservatives have titled their published Programme as '*The Correct Path for Britain*'.

Pollitt says that in their Programme the English Communists have put forward demands: pay enhancement, betterment of residential conditions, trade with the Soviet Union and with the countries of Peoples' Democracies, and also demands nationalisation of all important branches of English industry under conditions that the representatives of the English working class should manage these.

Comrade Stalin asks how do the English Communists counter the Labourite plan of

nationalisation. As much as we know, says Comrade Stalin, in branches of industry that have been nationalised by the Labourites, the capitalists have remained in their posts, their profits are rising, but the pay of the workers remains frozen. Do the English Communists criticise this situation?

Pollitt answers that the English Communists do criticise the Labourites for this, considering the struggle against freezing of pay as their major line of struggle.

Comrade Stalin states that as he thinks, the Communist Party of England takes a very soft and completely unprincipled position in the struggle against the Labour Party. The English Communists should have told the Labourites that they, the Labourites, are not at all Socialist but the left wing of the Conservative Party. This is not done. This needs to be openly pronounced. English Communists must state that under the Labour government the capitalists feel very fine, that their profits grow. This one fact speaks out that the Labourites are building no socialism.

In England the workers want that they be involved in the management of the nationalised branches of industries. It appears that in the nationalised industries in England the capitalists continue to direct the economy and get huge profits. This situation is incomprehensible for the Soviet people who under nationalisation understand that if any branch of industry is nationalised, the capitalists are removed from there and it is managed only by the representatives of the working class. Soviet people cannot visualise any other nationalisation. In England, the capitalists continue to manage it and as a consequence, their profits grow.

Comrade Stalin further states that, in the elections the defeat of the Labour Party should certainly not be permitted, but one should criticise the Labour Party from the principles of socialism. Such criticism impresses the workers as the workers see that nationalisation brought about by the Labourites does not give them, the workers, any benefits and, on the contrary, secures for the capitalists all sorts of profits. It does not happen that the profits of capitalists grow and at the same time the conditions of the working class also improve. If the profits grow then the condition of the workers does not improve but goes down. This is how we, the Soviet people, understand this and the British workers shall also understand such agitation.

Comrade Stalin says that without a Programme meant for a long period of time, the Party cannot grow, develop and increase the number of its supporters among the working class.

English Communists are accused in England that they have put before themselves the aim of establishing Soviet power in England. The English Communists must respond to this in their Programme that they do not want to weaken the Parliament, that England shall reach socialism through its own path and not through the path traversed by Soviet power but through a democratic republic that shall be guided not by capitalists but by representatives of peoples' power i.e. a coalition of workers, working intelligentsia, lower classes of the cities as well as farmers. Communists must declare that this power shall act through the Parliament.

Comrade Stalin continued to say that the Communists in Anglo-Saxon countries are inclined to concentrate their forces on current everyday tasks of purely practical character and not looking far ahead. This shortsightedness of narrow practicality has led

to the Communist parties in Anglo-Saxon countries being weak. The Communist Party of England should provide to the English people a perspective of a long term development of England and her future.

Comrade Stalin continued to state that it should be pointed out in the Programme that only a coalition of the working class, working intelligentsia, lower strata of the cities and of farmers can guarantee to the English people peace, increase in salaries and the supply of raw material for English industries and markets for English goods. If the English Communists give this perspective to the English people and shall propagate their programme without demagogy then the best among the working class shall return from the Labourites to the side of the Communists.

Comrade Stalin said that the talk should be of a Peoples' Democratic path for the movement of England to Socialism and not of the Soviet path but of that path on which the countries of Peoples' Democracy are moving towards socialism.

Pollitt said that English Communist Party has no such programme that could open before the English people the perspective for the future of Britain.

Comrade Stalin said that among the workers there are thinking people who would like to listen to the British Communist Party regarding where the CP of England wants to take England. If the English Communists prepare such a programme opening a perspective of development of England to Socialism then such a programme shall be understood and supported by the English working class.

Comrade Stalin continued to state that such is our opinion about the working of the CP of England and that he, Comrade Stalin, has expressed it as a matter of advice. It is the job of the English Communist party to decide how to proceed further. If Pollitt could postpone his departure so that the main points of the programme could be put on paper, then he, Comrade Stalin, and other leading comrades from the CC AUCP (b) could see the document prepared by Pollitt and would be able to give advice.

Pollitt announces that he is fully in agreement with what Comrade Stalin has said about the Programme. However he, Pollitt, thinks it to be imperative that such a document is collectively prepared in England together with other comrades from the English Communist Party, in particular, as he desired, together with Dutt.

Comrade Stalin said that this certainly was good. However, he, Comrade Stalin does not propose that Pollitt prepare the draft of the Programme immediately. It would be desirable if Pollitt could put in writing the major formulations of the programme so that one could be convinced that he, Comrade Stalin, and Pollitt properly understood each other.

Comrade Stalin said that in their programme the Communists of England should also respond to the accusations that they are trying to destroy Britain. Communists must make it clear that it is not they but the Conservatives and Labourites who are destroying Britain. He, Comrade Stalin, is convinced that the British Communists not only should not destroy Britain but must strengthen it on its own basis, putting to an end the present abnormal mutual relations between peoples that are now under the British Empire. We, continued Comrade Stalin, also had colonies in the East and South of Russia. However, we established a new relationship; a relationship of friendship with the erstwhile colonial

people of Russia and today, not one of the earlier Russian colonies wants to exit from the Soviet Union.

Comrade Stalin continued to say that the English Communists are shying away from these questions. However, these must be answered.

Comrade Stalin asks as to what are the left Labourites like Platts-Mills, Pritt and others.

Pollitt answers that Platts-Mills, Pritt, Hutchinson and Solly are people who vote for the Communists. They try to join the Communist Party but he, Pollitt, restrains them from doing so. Desirous to similarly join the Communist Party is the well known physicist Professor Bernal who is conducting very big and very useful work for the struggle for peace in Britain. He, Pollitt, has also not recommended Bernal to join Communist Party.

Comrade Stalin asks as to why Pollitt does this?

Pollitt answers that enlisting such persons who command high influence in such strata of the people which the Communist Party is not in a position to influence. If Bernal, Pritt and others join the CP then they as members of the CP may lose their influence.

Comrade Stalin says that for such persons the English CP could establish an institution of sympathisers. Among the sympathisers there could be persons who do not fully agree with the Programme of the CP but sympathise with it as a whole. The institution of sympathisers could also act as verification of those who want to join the Party as its members. We have, continued Comrade Stalin, an institution for the Candidate members of the Party. We sometimes verify the candidates over a period of ten years before accepting them as members of the Party. Candidates and sympathisers are not so linked as members of the Party. This is why he, Comrade Stalin, would recommend introducing the institution of sympathisers.

Comrade Stalin asks as to what position the English Communists have in the Trade Unions and in the Cooperative movement.

Pollitt answers that the Communists have some position in the cooperative movement but this is not significant as the cooperative organisations as a norm do not permit election of Communists in leading positions. In the Trade Unions the English Communists have, and continue to hold, a sufficiently wide field of activities.

Comrade Stalin asks if the Cooperative Party puts forward its candidates in the Parliament elections.

Pollitt answers that the Cooperative Party puts forward its candidates in elections in agreement with the Labour Party.

Comrade Stalin comments that in this manner the Cooperative Party in fact is a branch of the Labour Party.

Pollitt supports this comment.

Comrade Stalin says that it is imperative to break this link between the Cooperative and the Labour Parties so that the Cooperative Party became more independent and more objective.

Comrade Stalin says that there are indications that the system of rationing on some categories of goods in England causes harm to the workers. During the war there was such a system of rationing in the Soviet Union. The prices of some so rationed goods in the Soviet Union were lower and the people liked it. However, the norms of the supply of goods were never high. This is why the workers were compelled to buy supplementary supplies from the free market where the price of the products were a number of times higher than in the chain of state trading. When the workers calculated their budget, they were convinced that the rationing system was very harmful for him. The state then changed the system of rationing but without limiting the supply of products. After this the state started to reduce the price of various products and at present the worker may buy any amount of products on reasonable price.

Comrade Stalin asks if the English worker is not compelled to buy supplementary products from the free market as the distribution of products as per norms is not sufficient as the British norms of distribution of such products as meat and butter are quite low.

Pollitt answers on the whole the English worker does not buy his products from the free market as for him and his family the products supplied as per norm are sufficient though the norms for such products as meat and butter in fact are extremely low. The matter, however, is that the price of rationed commodities go on continuously rising. This is especially so after devaluation. The prices of those commodities are sharply rising whose distribution is no longer covered by rationing. For example till the month of May this year when oranges were given on cards, the price of oranges was 8 pence per pound. In the beginning of May rationing of oranges was abolished and its price increased three times. Sometimes back the government changed rationing on confectionery and sugar. This led to the situation that in shops the prices of confectionery and sugar increased.

In the beginning of May similarly the government withdrew the rationing on fish and as a result the price of fish sharply increased. The house-wives organised a boycott of the fish vendors and did not buy fish from them at such prices. After three days after the announcement of the boycott the shopkeepers were compelled to reduce the price of fish.

Pollitt said that in the light of the facts stated by him the rationing system in Britain is not unpopular.

Comrade Stalin commented that the rationing system is not a healthy step.

Pollitt said that he considers the rationing system as a type of game of dice in itself that the Labour government is playing.

Comrade Stalin said that he has no more questions to ask Pollitt.

Pollitt asks if he has correctly understood that Comrade Stalin approves of the tactics of the English Party for the coming elections as he, Pollitt, put it in his note addressed to the CC A-UCP (b) as he, Pollitt, expects the elections to the Parliament to be held in September.

Comrade Stalin answers that he considers the tactics, put forward by Pollitt in the note as correct.

Pollitt says that unfortunately he has not kept a copy of his note for himself.

Comrade Stalin promises to give copy of the letter of Pollitt to him.

Pollitt asks if it will be proper for the CP to give first place to the struggle for peace in its election campaign.

Comrade Stalin answers that it will be proper in so far as the discussion is about foreign policy. Besides this, in the field of internal affairs they should speak out for the improvement in the living conditions of the working class.

Pollitt thanks Comrade Stalin for the discussion and for the good advice that he gave. He, Pollitt, is fully in agreement with what was said by Comrade Stalin about the Programme. The draft of such Programme he, Pollitt, shall certainly prepare though he thinks that it would be better if it is done in England. After a month he, Pollitt, shall send the draft of the Programme to Moscow.

Comrade Stalin answers that this could be done.

While taking leave of Comrade Stalin, Pollitt said he is confident that the English workers desire that he, Pollitt, say to Comrade Stalin: Big thanks to you Comrade Stalin for all that you have done for finishing the Second World War, for victory in the Second World War and all that you are doing at the present moment for the preservation of peace.

Comrade Stalin said that it would be good if the English people supported the efforts of the Soviet government for the protection of peace.

Pollitt says that he will do everything that he can to this end.

The discussion continued for one hour and twenty minutes.

Noted by (Signed) V. Pavlov

RGASPI, Fond 558, Opus 11, Delo 287, Listy 41-56.

**Translation from English
Communist Party Executive Committee
London, W.C.2, King Street-16**

11th July 1950

Dear Comrade Stalin!

On 31st of May in your comments you made a suggestion that probably it would be sensible to prepare the draft of a Programme calculated to cover a long period, so that you may be convinced whether we correctly understood each other in the process that you consider to be very significant for our future work.

Already I had exchange of opinion with my friends and am sending to you the draft in order to get your advice and suggestions.

I noticed that during our discussion in London about different drafts the necessity of having something linked with the 'Workers' in the heading of it was always underlined. There is a suggestion that, possibly the heading 'For a Progressive Workers' Government and a Peoples' Democratic England' would be better than the one present

in the suggested draft.

For me it would be a matter of great happiness to meet you again.

With best wishes

Fraternally Yours

(Harry Pollitt)

Translated by Nekrasov.

RGASPI, Fond 558, Opis 11, Delo 288, Listy 4.

To Comrade Harry Pollitt

Received your letter with the draft of the programme 'For Peoples' Parliament and Peoples' England' annexed to it. Having acquainted myself with this document, I fulfill your request and give my comments on the draft of the programme sent by you.

1. A half-hearted criticism of the politics of the leadership of the Labour Party is a serious shortcoming of the document. Criticism of the Labourites in the draft programme is timid and insufficiently concrete. The English Communists in the programme of their party should openly say that the Labourites are not at all socialists but in fact are the left-wing of the Conservative Party. It is necessary to say more clearly that under a Labour government the capitalists feel very good and their profits go on increasing and that this one fact itself tells that the Labourites are in no way about to build socialism.

2. The draft programme does not answer the charge that the English Communists, as if, are trying to destroy the British Empire. This question, from which it is not possible to shy away and which should be given a direct answer has exclusive significance. It is necessary to directly announce that Britain is being destroyed not by the English Communists but by the Conservatives and the Labourites who by their repressions and colonial loot are weakening Britain and are leading to its dissolution; that the Communists, on the contrary put forward before them the objective to strengthen Britain on a new democratic foundation, putting an end to the earlier abnormal relations between peoples constituting the British Empire, establishing friendship of the English people with them on the basis of equality.

3. The draft of the programme correctly puts forward the task of utilising the traditional English institutions (Parliament) in the struggle for socialism. It is well known that the English Communists are being accused that they will establish Soviet Power in England. Hence it is imperative that in the draft of the programme it should be very clearly and definitely stated that the English Communists are not going to delegitimise Parliament, that England shall come to socialism through its own path and not through Soviet Power, but through Peoples' Democracy that would be guided by peoples' power and not by capitalists; peoples' power representing a coalition of working class as the leading force of the coalition, working intelligentsia, small and middle strata of the cities as well as farmers. The Communists must declare that this power shall act through the Parliament. The programme must underline that only this given coalition can provide to the English people peace, higher wages, and raw material for English industry and markets for English products. The Programme must talk about Peoples' Democracy as the path for the movement of England toward the path to Socialism, the path on which the countries of Peoples' Democracy are moving towards socialism.

4. The draft of the Programme insufficiently underlines the task of the struggle of the

Communist Party for national independence of England from American Imperialism. It is necessary to show in the Programme that the English Communists are real defenders of the national interests of the English people, as they forcefully and persistently participate in exposing the exploitative politics of the Labourite leadership, directed towards subordination of the country to American capital. It is especially important to underline in the Programme that even the Conservatives did not have such a strong alliance with the capitalists of America as the Labourites. Labourites are directly subordinated to the imperialist groups of America and openly betray the national interests of England.

5. It is essential to explain in detail in the draft Programme the questions regarding a stable and prolonged peace, explaining that the politics of the arms race, the conversion of England into an American front for a new world war goes against the national interests of England and is laden with very serious consequences for the English people. It is necessary to show that the achievement of the ultimate goals of the struggle mentioned in the draft of the Programme is inseparably linked with the over all-struggle of the peoples for peace and against the threat of a new war.

6. The Draft of the Programme correctly explains the essence of Labour's nationalisation policy which is based on the policy of bestowing huge compensations paid to earlier owners of the 'nationalised' branches of industries.

In this part of the Programme it should be stated that the English workers want socialist nationalisation; they want to be involved in the management of the nationalised industries and the system is ended in which the capitalists continue to manage the so called 'nationalised' industries while getting grandiose profits.

It should be noted that the draft Programme in its structure and characteristics of presentation more significantly reminds one of an election platform with which the English Communist Party often enters the Parliament elections and not a Programme of the English Communist Party that is calculated for a long period of time and provides direction and ideal to the masses of the English people.

In order to overcome these shortcomings in the Programme it would be appropriate to introduce in part the following sections after a general introduction.

1. Tasks of the Party in the struggle for lasting peace and against the threat of a new war.

2. English Communists are the only rightful champion for the national independence of England and for the strengthening of the British Empire on a democratic foundation.

3. England shall come to socialism through its own path – not through Soviet Power, but through Peoples' Democracy.

4. We do not want capitalist but socialist nationalisation headed by the working class of England.

5. The immediate task of the Party is achieving a wage raise for the workers. It is necessary to pay attention to the fact that the character of the above mentioned presentation be clear and understandable for the wide masses of the English people. The Programme of the English Communist Party worked out by you would undoubtedly

help in the growth and development of the Party, for the strengthening of its position in the masses of the workers of England and in an increase in the number of supporters of the English communists among them. Such a Programme shall provide to the English working class masses sharp and clear direction and shall point to the path of the struggle for the vital interests of the English people.

With respects,

Your co-discussant

28th September 1950.

RGASPI, Fond 558, Opis 11, Delo 288, Listy 84-87.

Letter Pollitt to Stalin; Translation from English

Bucharest, 18.10.1950

Dear Comrade Stalin,

I received your letter dated 28th September and thank you for your advice and help.

I assume that you should be informed about the happenings that took place after our last meeting on 31st May.

On 9th July I spoke in the meeting of the Executive Committee of our Party *concerning the struggle for peace and unity, about the necessity of the Programme of the Party and about our election tactics in the next general elections.*

In the speech I tried to do serious self-criticism and it was published for the members of the Party as a separate brochure and its 30,000 copies were sold.

In this lecture, I put forward some political formulations that we had discussed on 31st of May and about which you again recalled in your letter of 28th September.

My July speech was discussed by our Party and by the end of August the overwhelming majority of the members of the Party supported the criticism and self-criticism as well as the policies put forward in the speech.

In the July session, the Executive Committee of the Politbureau was given the task of preparing the Programme of the Party calculated for a long period of time and to present it for discussion in the next meeting of the Executive Committee.

A Commission was constituted for drafting the Programme. The Politbureau a number of times discussed different versions of the draft Programme that were prepared by the Commission.

I sent to you a version that we considered possible for adoption as a basic text. In the meeting of the Politbureau held on 20th September we again, while discussing the draft of the Programme, decided to reject it as *we considered that it appears as the reading of an election programme and not as a Programme meant for over a long period of time and that it appears to be resting between two stools.*

We got down to re-writing the new draft that should be presented for discussion of the Executive Committee on 25th November.

Later I was informed about the necessity of going to Bucharest for getting your letter. As the urgent extraordinary meeting of the Executive Committee regarding the final mobilisation of the Party for the preparation of the Second World Congress of the

Supporters of Peace was scheduled for *14-15 October*, I assumed that it would be better to go to Bucharest *after* the meeting of the Executive Committee.

I very attentively read your letter and shall yet more deeply study it in the next few days.

It shall render us big help from the point of view of form as well as from the point of view of the content of the new Programme of the Party. Now we are beginning the preparation of this Programme with a view to discuss the new draft on *25th November*.

I assure you that we are doing everything possible to guarantee exclusive success to the Second World Congress of the Supporters of Peace to be held in Sheffield.

I thank you once again and send you best wishes.

With fraternal greetings

(Harry Pollitt)

Translated by Andreeva

RGASPI, Fond 558, Opis 11, Delo 288, Listy 94-5.

Transcript of Meeting of Comrade Stalin with Harry Pollitt

5th January 1951

Present: Comrades V.M. Molotov and Pavlov (Interpreter).

Comrade Stalin said that the document (Draft of the Programme of the Communist Party of England) has come up well.

Pollitt answered that it is the final draft and was prepared in accordance with the September letter of Comrade Stalin.

Comrade Stalin said that he has made some amendments to the draft and he wanted to know the opinion of Pollitt about these amendments. He, Comrade Stalin, brought to attention the fact that the draft talks about equality of nations that enter the Commonwealth of Nations. In the press or in public speeches one may talk about equality of nations. However, this is not scientific. It will be more appropriate to talk about the equal rights of nations and not of the equality of nations. One nation cannot be equal to the other in the same way as one man cannot be equal to the other. For example, irrespective of what concessions the Malayan nation may get from the English government, the Malayan nation shall not immediately become equal to the English nation as the cultural level of the English nation is higher than that of the Malayan nation. Besides, the English nation commands incomparably more significant quantity of prepared cadre than the Malaysians. Consequently, we may talk about providing to the nations not equality but equal rights which one nation may use better than the other. He, Comrade Stalin, would like to know whether Comrade **Pollitt** agrees with it.

Pollitt answers that he fully agrees with this amendment.

Comrade Stalin says that in the Programme the question of nationalisation is not put

forward clearly. Basing on what is stated on this count one may conclude that the entire landed property shall be nationalised. We, says Comrade Stalin, think that the landed property of the small landholders in agricultural regions should not be nationalised. If Comrade Pollitt wants to establish a coalition with the working class, working intelligentsia, lower and middle strata in the cities and small property holders in the villages then one has to deny nationalisation of small landed property. In this there is nothing dangerous. In the countries of People's Democracies, for example, small landholdings have not been nationalised.

Comrade Stalin further continues that he wanted to propose an amendment regarding the question of compensation to the owners of the property which would be nationalised. The draft of the Programme does not visualise any compensation with the exception of compensation for those property holders who are found to be in a difficult material condition. He, Comrade Stalin, thinks it is necessary to think about such partial compensation for those property holders who shall have loyal relationship with the people's government but denying compensation to those owners of nationalised property who shall resist the people's government.

Comrade Stalin jokingly commented that just as Comrade Pollitt may notice, Comrade Stalin criticises the draft of the Programme from the rightist position.

Pollitt laughed and said that the criticism of the draft made by Comrade Stalin is fully justified as here and there we have certainly introduced elements of Leftism in the draft.

Comrade Stalin reads out that the section from the part titled '*People's Democracy – The Way to Socialism*' in which it is said that, as experience has shown, it is possible to march towards socialism through the path of People's Democracy just as it is being done in the countries of People's Democracy in Western Europe and in the People's Republic of China.

Comrade Stalin says that this statement is not precise as the People's Republic of China has not yet reached the stage of People's Democracy. In China the national bourgeoisie yet remains untouched; nationalisation has encompassed only the property of the Japanese. The Chinese think it to be correct that for the present they have not touched the national bourgeoisie. Consequently, if the draft wants to cite the People's Republic of China then there shall be no harmony as the draft foresees the nationalisation of the big private property of the English bourgeoisie.

Pollitt answers that he understands the erroneousness of mentioning the example of People's Republic of China.

Comrade Stalin says that it would have been proper to forewarn the English people in the Programme that the capitalists shall not voluntarily give up their property and their disproportionate profits for the benefit of the English people. It would be more proper to propose that they shall actively resist the decisions of the people's Parliament and shall fight with all means for the preservation of their privileges including the use of force. This is why the English people and the people's government should be ready in self-defence to give a befitting reply to such attempts. This should be said in the Programme.

Pollitt answered that he agrees with this.

Comrade Stalin said that in the section titled '*Socialist Nationalisation*' where it is said that small shopkeepers and managers shall be freed from the limitations imposed by the

monopolists, he suggested that after the word, 'small shopkeepers and managers', words 'and also the small property holders in agricultural regions' be added.

Comrade Stalin added that in the section titled '*Social Service*' where equal pay for work to men and women is discussed, the words 'for equal labour' should be added.

Comrade Stalin continues, that at the end of the draft of the Programme where the establishment of a free and happy Socialist Britain is mentioned, he would remove the words 'and for the liberation of mankind' and proposed that the sentence should end with the following words, 'establishment of a free and happy, strong and powerful socialist Great Britain'. Recalling in the draft only about Britain may create a feeling that the CP of England renounces the dominions and other English ownerships.

Pollitt said, that as Great Britain includes only England, Wales and Scotland, it would be better to mention about the establishment of free and happy, strong and powerful Socialist Britain and Commonwealth of Nations. In so far as the words 'liberation of mankind' is concerned, these are rhetorical and these should in fact be excluded.

Comrade Stalin says, he agrees that the word 'Great Britain' should be changed by the words 'Britain and Commonwealth of Nations'.

Comrade Stalin says, that in the section titled '*National Independence of the English People and of all the Peoples of British Empire*' where it says that, 'All Relationships Between the Peoples of Contemporary Empire that are based on political, economic and military domination should come to an end and be transformed into new relationships based on complete national independence and equality. This requires the recall of all military forces and of English administrative personnel from the territories of the colonial and dependent countries, handing over of sovereignty to governments freely elected by the people and return of the wealth and of the natural resources to the people of these countries that have been appropriated by industries, traders and by monopoly banks'. He, Comrade Stalin, would have excluded the words, 'and return to the people of these countries their wealth and natural resources that were these were appropriated by industries, traders and bank monopolies'. In the present formulation a very complex question has been raised. It is hardly possible to have a complete solution of this problem if only for the reason that it is impossible, for example, to return to the people of the colonial and dependent countries those resources that have already been consumed by the metropolis. Certainly if the pocket of Comrade Pollitt be full of money, then he may compensate the countries exploited by British imperialism. However, he, Comrade Stalin, has his doubts on this count.

Pollitt answers that Comrade Stalin is perfectly right. Certainly, the people's government shall not have sufficient resources for the satisfaction of the task suggested in the Programme. He, Pollitt, thinks the suggestion of Comrade Stalin to have the concerned formulation mentioned above to be removed from the Programme to be correct. He, Pollitt, would like to know the opinion of Comrade Stalin as to whether the formulation regarding the return of the English administrative personnel from the territories of colonial and dependent countries as discussed in the passage discussed earlier. The fact is that the governments, to whom the sovereignty over these territories shall be handed over, shall ask the people's government for help by English cadre.

Comrade Stalin said that he has doubts whether it is worthwhile to discuss at this moment the return of English administrative personnel. It is possible that the Americans may want the return of the English administrative personnel recalled by the people's

government to put in these territories under discussion their own administrative personnel. This is why he, Comrade Stalin, thinks that may be it is better to talk about the return of the English bureaucratic apparatus. However, he agrees with Comrade Pollitt that one should not at all talk about the return of the English administrative personnel and exclude the words 'and English administrative personnel'.

Pollitt asks how Comrade Stalin evaluates the draft of the Programme as a whole.

Comrade Stalin answers that the draft has been well prepared and says that the appearance of the Programme of the Communist Party of England occupies a turning point in the history of the working class movement of the Anglo-Saxon countries. This Programme in its essence is a suitable document for the Communist Parties of USA, Canada, Australia and other Anglo-Saxon countries. The Communist Party of the USA at the moment is in a hard situation; they have a lot of confusion. One should, however, recognise, says Comrade Stalin, that however much the Americans may take pride in their democracy, in monarchist England there is more freedom than in the USA.

Pollitt says that he is in full agreement with it.

Comrade Stalin asks when the Programme is expected to be passed and published.

Pollitt answers that the Plenum of the Executive Committee is fixed for 13th of January where the Programme must be discussed and approved. Thus the Programme would be published by the end of January.

Comrade Stalin says that the Programme should be published in as large numbers as possible and be sent to the USA, Canada, Australia and to other Anglo-Saxon countries. If help is required for the publication of the Programme then we, says Comrade Stalin, shall help.

Pollitt says that he has taken on himself the responsibility to send the draft of the Programme to Tim Buck in Canada.

Comrade Stalin said that he has put before Pollitt the main amendments to the draft. There are other less significant amendments. All these have been put in the text of the draft and shall be translated in English and tomorrow morning these will be delivered to Pollitt.

Pollitt thanks Comrade Stalin for the help.

Comrade Stalin answers: 'This is our duty'.

Recorded by V. Pavlov.

RGASPI, Fond 558, Opis 11, Delo 289, Listy 1-9.

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Translated from the Russian by Jaweed Ashraf.

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Letter of Harry Pollitt

Dated 19th January 1950; RGASPI, Opis 11, Delo 289, List 12

THE COMMUNIST PARTY

Secretary : H. Pollitt

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
10 King Street, London, W.C.2.
Telephone: TEMple Bar 2151-55
Telegrams: Communal Rand London12
19th January, 1951.

Dear Comrade,

I enclose the final proof of the new Long Term Programme which we shall issue to the people on February 1st.

I have made many changes in it since I had the pleasure of meeting you, but you will find that these changes are in the nature of making the document read more simply, and in better English.

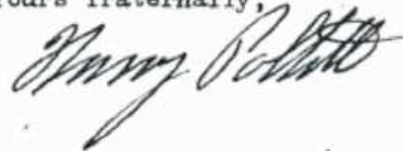
The changes do not in any way alter the political formulations which remain as they were with the exception of putting them into the best English.

I attach to this letter the procedure we shall carry out to make the Programme known to the people, and in addition of course I shall send an explanatory letter and copies of the Programme to our brother Parties in the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

I was very pleased to see you again, and to find you looking so well and vigorous.

Wishing you every success in all that you undertake.

Yours fraternally,



2b) Editorial by Vijay Singh: “The British Road to Socialism of 1951: A Programme of People’s Democracy”

<https://www.revolutionarydemocracy.org/rdv13n2/brs1951.htm>

In the post-Second World War period a number of Communist Parties made requests to the CPSU (b) for assistance in drafting their party programmes. The Communist Party of Great Britain and the Communist Party of India were two such parties which benefited from these consultations. Stalin and Liu Shao-chi jointly co-operated in helping in the drafting of the programme of the Communist Party of Indonesia. The CPSU (b), as part of the united front of Communist Parties in power, gave its advice on the advance to democracy and socialism in the People’s Democracies of Central and South-East Europe and the People’s Republic of China. The detailed suggestions and advice of the CPSU (b) in the struggles against nationalism and opportunism in the leadership of the communist parties of the new democracies is apparent from the contemporary documentation and the materials released after the fall of the Soviet Union. The entire gamut of these materials reveal a unified approach to the advance of democracy and socialism right across the globe.

The contribution of Stalin in the writing of the British Road to Socialism was the object of controversy in the midst of the period of the polemics of Albania against Soviet revisionism when both Khrushchev and the Albanian communists referred to it in 1963. However, in the absence of the relevant documentation the nature and significance of Stalin’s contribution was always opaque. There were clear grounds for supposing that the interpretation of Khrushchev and the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU of the ‘peaceful’ and ‘parliamentary’ path to socialism did not correspond to the known views of Lenin and Stalin on these questions. Equally it was apparent that the early British criticisms of the British Road to Socialism had not taken a number of questions into account.

The British Road to Socialism was published in January, 1951 after being adopted by the Executive Committee of the CPGB and a new, revised edition was issued in the April of the following year after its adoption at the XXII National Congress of the Communist Party. The new programme replaced the earlier ‘For Soviet Britain...’ which had been adopted by the CPGB at its XIII Congress in February 1935. The British Road to Socialism underwent a number of modifications after the 20th Congress of the CPSU. A comparison of the programmes on the cardinal questions of the workers’ councils, parliament, the relation of the Communist and Labour Parties in the transition to socialism, the dictatorship of the proletariat and the attitude to be adopted to the British Empire, indicate the changes which occurred in the understanding of the international communist movement and the CPGB over intervening years.

The CPGB programme in 1935 rejected the possibility that capitalism could be ended and socialism established by the election of a majority in the House of Commons as suggested by the Labour Party as the capitalist class would not permit itself to be expropriated by successive Acts of Parliament. The fact there was no ‘peaceful, gradual’ way to socialism was revealed by the rise to power of Fascism in Europe which showed that the capitalists themselves had thrown overboard all forms of democracy to preserve their power and profits. The Labour Party in Britain did not tolerate united action amongst the workers against Fascism and war just as the German Social Democrats had rejected the United Front against Fascism and so opened the way to the success of Fascism in Germany. The only way to win power was through a workers’

revolution founded upon a united front of the working class around the elementary demands against wage-cuts, high rents, speed-up, wholesale dismissals as well as the fight against Fascism and for colonial liberation. Civil war was forced upon the working class by the capitalists which meant that the overthrow of capitalism would be a forceful one. The conquest of power by the workers is facilitated by the men of the armed forces who after all were only workers in uniform. The CPGB rejected the possibility that the parliamentary system could serve the workers' dictatorship after capitalism had been overthrown as it was but one part of a machinery of government which included the Cabinet, the civil service the military and the judiciary and the police which maintained the rule of capital.

Under conditions of the workers' dictatorship, through the Workers' Councils, the capitalist machinery of the government would be broken up and replaced. After taking power the workers' councils would immediately proclaim the right of all countries in the British empire to complete self-determination up to and including complete separation. All British armed forces and police would be withdrawn from the colonies and all the claims of British imperialist finance would be cancelled. Freed of the burden of imperialism the less industrially developed would be in a position to exchange their products for the industrial equipment required to build up their own industry.

It is evident that this programme conformed to the traditions of Bolshevism and the Comintern of that period. With the rise to power of Nazism in Germany, the Spanish civil war and the Japanese invasion of China, the CPSU (b) and the Comintern re-orientated their activities to defend the democratic and socialist movement from the onslaught of reaction by the establishment of proletarian and popular fronts against fascism and the war danger which was represented by Germany, Italy and Japan. Because of this the British party programme became quickly outdated.

The new party programme which was adopted in 1951, the British Road to Socialism, necessarily took into account the new correlation of forces on a world scale, the experiences gained after the Seventh Congress of the Comintern, particularly with the establishment of the New Democracies and People's Democracies in Central and South-East Europe, the Chinese revolution. The new party programme was not one of establishing a Soviet Socialist Britain but of establishing a People's Democracy in Britain. As one of the sub-headings of the programme states: 'People's Democracy – The Path to Socialism'. It was the *road* to Socialism and so it did not envisage the immediate establishment of Socialism based on Workers' Councils, the immediate establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the destruction of parliament, the civil service, the police, the military, the judiciary and the rest of the bourgeois state apparatus. Drawing on the experiences of the People's Democracies of Central and South-East Europe the British Road envisaged the utilisation of Parliament and the formation of a People's Government based on the various sections of the working-class movement: Labour, trade union, co-operative and Communist based on a parliamentary majority. In the economic sphere the *road* to socialism envisaged socialist nationalisation and workers' control of monopoly capital and big landed property but not the properties of the small shopkeepers, businessmen, small landowners and farmers in the countryside. The British Empire was to be transformed, inspired it is clear by the example of the Soviet Union, into 'a strong, free, equal association of peoples by granting national independence to the colonies'.

The British Road to Socialism in the editions of 1951 and 1952 does not refer to a peaceful transition to socialism. On the contrary the programme anticipated that:

In carrying through these decisive measures to implement the democratic will of the people, every effort of the capitalist class to defy the People's Government and Parliament will be resisted and defeated.

The great broad popular alliance, led by the working class, firmly based on the factories, which has democratically placed the People's Government in power, will have the strength to deal with the attacks of the capitalist warmongers and their agents.

The Government will rely on the strength of the organised workers to ensure that the programme decided upon by Parliament is operated in practice, and that attempts to resist or sabotage it are defeated, and the enemies of the working class brought to justice.

It would be wrong to believe that the big capitalists will voluntarily give up their property and their big profits in the interests of the British people.

It would be more correct to expect them to offer an active resistance to the decisions of the People's Government, and to fight for the retention of their privileges by all means in their power, including force.

Therefore the British people and the People's Government should be ready decisively to rebuff such attempts.

The methods whereby the organised working class would counter and defeat the resistance of the capitalists were not spelt out but it may be reasonably supposed that the methods adopted by the Bolsheviks in the Russian revolution and the Communist and Workers' Parties in the revolutionary process in the People's Democracies of Eastern and South-East Europe and the national liberation war in Greece were not unknown to the CPGB.

The programme did not prescribe a parliamentary or constitutional road to socialism. The novel element in the British Road to Socialism in 1951 is that the notion of the utilisation of parliament in the transition to people's democracy was introduced for the first time in a British party programme.

The theses, 'The Communist Party and Parliament', adopted by the Second Congress of Comintern in 1920 had noted that parliament had played a certain progressive role as an instrument of the developing capitalist system but that in the period of imperialism, of civil war when the proletariat had to establish its own power the task was to wrest the parliamentary apparatus from the hands of the ruling classes, destroy it and replace it with new organs of proletarian power. Parliament could not serve as a form of proletarian state in the transition to the dictatorship of the proletariat, or as the state form of the future society. It could only be used with the object of destroying it.

In the period of the Popular Fronts, of New Democracy and People's Democracy the perspectives radically changed: the possibilities of using parliament in the revolutionary process now came to be actively considered. The two initial, major examples of this were in the course of the national liberation wars in Spain and China. The Letter of Voroshilov, Molotov and Stalin to Largo Caballero of December 1936 argued as follows: The Spanish revolution plots its course, different from many viewpoints from the course followed by Russia. This is determined by the difference in social, historical and geographic conditions and by the needs of the international situation, different from those the Russian revolution had to contend with. **It is very possible that the**

parliamentary way will show itself to be, in Spain, a more efficient means for revolutionary development than in Russia. But, having said that, we believe that our experience, especially the experience of our civil war, applied in accordance with the peculiar conditions of the Spanish revolutionary struggle, may have a certain importance for Spain. (Our emphasis).

A similar position obtained in China where Mao and the Communist Party of China dropped the perspectives of expanding the Chinese Soviet Republic and in the interest of the united national front against the invasion of Japanese imperialism now came out in February 1938 for the establishment of a democratic republic in China:

In the democratic republic which the Communist Party advocates, parliament will be elected by our people, who refuse to be colonial slaves. Elections will be based on universal suffrage without any restrictions. Ours will be a democratic state. In broad outline it will be that state on whose establishment Sun Yat-sen insisted long ago. **It is along these lines that the Chinese state must develop.** (Our emphasis).

Mao and six other leading members of the Communist Party of China, in the interests of the joint struggle against Japan, went on to join the government of China, the National Political Council, notwithstanding the fact that it was not an elected body:

‘The Communist members of the Council do not repudiate responsibility on the pretext that the members of the Council are not elected by the people. We realise deeply that the members of the Council are the servants of the people, consequently we will resolutely strive to realise the desires, hopes and demands of the people of China. The unanimous demand of the people is that national unity be strengthened and the Japanese invaders driven out of China. We hope that our fellow countrymen will assist us and criticise us if we commit any mistakes. We hope that all the members of the Council will fulfill the desires of our people.’

The participation in a semi-parliamentary institution and joining a government headed by Chiang Kai-shek represented another instance of the changed perception of utilising parliament during the course of the revolutionary process.

Subsequently the parliaments of the Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia when faced with the threat of an aggressive and expansionist Nazi imperialism passed resolutions in 1940 requested to be permitted to accede to the Soviet Union. 1943-44 saw the rise of the Krajowa Rada Narodowa, the underground parliament of Poland which attempted to lead the armed struggle of the Polish people. In the post-war period the working class forces headed by the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia were able to seize power in 1948 which was facilitated by the strong positions which the party held within parliament. In Eastern Europe the political life was democratised and the judicial and state institutions introduced by the Nazis were destroyed. As these countries proceeded from the democratic revolution towards socialist revolution very diverse means were used to defeat the bourgeoisie including political demonstrations, the forcible seizure of state institutions, and the armed suppression of the military detachments of the bourgeoisie. Step by step the old bourgeois state apparatus was crushed, including the bourgeois democratic organs, and replaced by a new popular democratic state apparatus. In this struggle parliamentary forms of struggle were used but they were of a subordinate nature, reflecting the political changes rather than the means of their accomplishment. The Soviet specialist A. I. Sobolev writing in 1954

registered the parliamentary forms of the people's democratic republics in the different countries of Central and South-East Europe which were incorporated into the dictatorships of the proletariat:

The parliament elected by all the people on the basis of universal, equal and direct suffrage by secret ballot is the highest organ of state power in the people's republics. In Bulgaria and Albania this organ is called the National Assembly, in Hungary – the State Assembly, in Hungary – the State Assembly, in Rumania – the Grand National Assembly, in Czechoslovakia – the National Assembly, and in Poland – the People's Sejm.

Through a continuous process of struggle the transition took place of the first stage of the People's Democratic states identified as a form of the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry to the second, socialist, stage of People's Democracy in which the functions of the dictatorship of the proletariat were carried out and the process of socialist construction was accelerated.

The British Road to Socialism of 1951, as a Programme of People's Democracy, cannot be separately read from the understanding of People's Democracy as a new form of political organisation of society considered applicable across the globe from Mongolia to the United States of America. The experience of the People's Democratic States in Central and South-East Europe as well as those of Asia was of paramount importance here. Within this it was understood that the process of the break up of the bourgeois state structure and the carrying out of the functions of the dictatorship of the proletariat was an elongated though uninterrupted one. In his report to the Fifth Congress of the Bulgarian Communist Party in December 1948, Dimitrov graphically illustrates this in the context of Bulgaria. The September 1944 anti-fascist uprising in conjunction with the advance of the Soviet Army in the Balkans swept away the fascist regime in one blow. The bourgeois-fascist police was 'smashed to pieces' and a people's militia formed. Political power was wrested from the monarchy and the bourgeoisie which was allied with German imperialism and passed to Fatherland Front which under the leadership of the Party united the workers, peasants and intellectuals. The old bourgeois state machine was partially broken up in September 1944 and later completely so enabling Dimitrov to argue in 1948:

Embodying the rule of the working people under the leadership of the working class, the People's Democracy, in the existing historical situation, as is already proved by experience, can and must successfully perform the functions of the dictatorship of the proletariat for the liquidation of the capitalist elements and the organisation of a socialist economy. It can crush the resistance of the overthrown capitalists and landowners, crush their attempts to restore the rule of capital, and organise the building of industry on the basis of public ownership and planned economy.

Similar experiences were reported from elsewhere in Central and South-East Europe by Hilary Minc, Boleslaw Bierut and Matyas Rakosi. The understanding of People's Democracy elaborated in this period gave no exemption to Britain on the question of establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat under the British Road to Socialism through the path of People's Democracy.

This perspective was reversed in Central and South-East Europe with the rise of revisionism and 'market socialism' after 1953. In Yugoslavia the revolutionary process

had already been halted and reversed in 1948-49. In the People's Republic of China after 1949 the people's democratic state incorporated the middle bourgeoisie and its political parties into the state structure. As an editorial of *Pravda* dated 23rd September, 1950 pointed out:

While noting the fact that the Chinese People's republic is a people's democratic state and that it fights with the whole democratic camp for common aims and tasks, one cannot fail to see the difference between the people's democracy in China and in the countries of Central and South-East Europe. It is known that in the Central and South-East European countries the people's democratic regime is performing the functions of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the struggle for building the foundation of Socialism. At the present stage, the people's democracy in China is not a form of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Socialist construction has not yet been placed on the immediate order of the day in China.

However as is known the middle bourgeoisie and its political parties were never removed from the National People's Congress or the state structure of the Chinese Peoples' Republic so that the people's democratic dictatorship never came to exercise the functions of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This is apparent from a reading of the 1954 and subsequent Constitutions of the People's Republic of China. Over half a century the People's Republic of China has remained frozen as a people's democratic dictatorship which never developed towards carrying out the functions of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The failure to achieve any progress in this sphere paralleled the rise and expansion of 'market socialism' in the country.

Stalin's interventions in the framing and content of the British Road to Socialism confirm that he saw the programme of People's Democracy as the path to Socialism in the country, approved of the utilisation of Parliament and saw the programme as 'in its essence' as 'a suitable document for the Communist Parties of USA, Canada, Australia and other Anglo-Saxon countries'. He authored the suggestion for a free association of the peoples of the empire based on the right of self-determination. Stalin furthermore gave his concurrence and support to the electoral tactics of the CPGB in relation to the Labour Party in the General Elections. The stands of the CPGB on all of these questions have been contentious and the attitudes of Stalin the object of conjecture so it is invaluable to have his suggestions and observations available in the public domain for scrutiny by the communist movement.

The turn to 'market socialism' and revisionism registered at the Twentieth Party Congress of the CPSU and the Eighth Party Congress of the CPC reverberated around the people's democracies and the international communist movement. It resulted in the radical restructuring of the British Road to Socialism. A Commission was established to prepare a new draft of the programme and a revised text was submitted to the Party Congress in 1957, together with 1,500 amendments from Party organisations. The final text was adopted by the Executive Committee of the CPGB in January 1958. The new programme dropped the references to People's Democracy as being the Path to Socialism in Britain. It retained the understanding that Parliament required to be utilised but toned down the portion of the original programme which warned of the dangers presented by the resistance of the big capitalists to measures depriving them of their property and profits. New clauses were inserted which argued that '*a transition to socialism without armed conflict is possible today in many countries*' (our emphasis), and this was 'particularly true of our country, whose powerful Labour movement embodies

the British workers' fighting ability and experience of struggle, and where there is a strong tradition of democratic institutions.' By this the notion of a peaceful path to socialism was endorsed. In line with the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU the programme accepted 'decolonisation' theory, authored by Kautsky, under which colonial countries such as India were deemed to have become independent without the eradication of the hold of metropolitan finance capital. The right of all subject peoples to self-determination was retained (it had been repudiated three years earlier by the Communist Party of India) but the proposal for the formation of a free association of the peoples of the former empire was removed.

The British Road to Socialism of 1951 which had originally spoken of the use of parliament on the road to People's Democracy and Socialism was now transformed in 1958 to a parliamentary path to Socialism *without armed conflict*.

In the polemics which arose in the 1960s between the CPSU and its allies and the Party of Labour of Albania and the Communist Party of China the theses embodied in the British Road to Socialism became the object of analysis and discussion. In Britain the pioneer critic of modern revisionism was Michael McCreery who headed The Committee to Defeat Revisionism for Communist Unity from its formation in November, 1963, until his early death from cancer at the age of 36, in April 1965. The formation of the CDRCU was a major milestone in the development of the Marxist-Leninist movement in Britain and it had an international presence such that its materials were on sale in a number of countries including India.

A re-reading of two of McCreery's articles, *The British Road to Socialism* and *The Way Forward* suggests that the author did not distinguish between the two radically different versions of the British Road to Socialism of 1951 and 1958, and, also did not consider the events in the post-Leninist period and their theoretical summing up by the Communist movement. McCreery confined his criticisms to the 1958 programme. It is noticeable that the names of Dimitrov and Stalin, as well as those leading Communists who had written on the questions relating to People's Democracy, are absent from the collection of his writings available to us. McCreery criticised the propositions put forward in 1958, which had not been present in 1951, that Parliament could be transformed 'into the effective instrument of the people's will through which the major legislative measures of the change to socialism will be carried' and that it was possible to build Socialism in Britain 'without armed conflict'. He based his criticisms on Lenin's writings which stressed the need to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat and to break up and destroy the existing state structure. Moreover he understood the falsity of the views projected by the leaders of the CPGB such as James Klugmann that because of the alleged strengthening of the socialist system and the 'weakening' of imperialism that a transition to socialism was possible without armed conflict in Britain.

In retrospect we know that far from being strengthened socialism in the USSR had been reversed in the period 1954-58 with the means of production beginning to circulate as commodities in the state sector, labour power thereby becoming a commodity and profit becoming the criterion of efficiency of the enterprises; directive planning for constructing advanced socialism and communism was replaced by 'co-ordinated planning' to establish a market economy. Imperialism far from being weakened went from strength to strength and ultimately destroyed the camp of socialism and democracy.

McCreery's criticisms of the 1958 British Road to Socialism were fundamentally correct. However, he did not enter into the question of evaluating the programme of 1951 which he considered contained the ideas of the 1958 programme. He was, apparently,

unaware that the original 1951 version of the British Road to Socialism was an integral part of a Programme of establishing People's Democracy in Britain.

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(3) Response – Hari Kumar; July 10th, 2019

We focus on four main points arising from Singh's editorial:

- i) How different was Stalin's viewpoint from that of Lenin, and why did Stalin adopt it?
- ii) The failure of working class organisations to prevent fascism in Germany and Italy;
- iii) The role of the revolutionary Red Army in creating the Peoples Democracies; and,
- iv) Stalin's responses to changes in the international balance of power post-1945

i) How different was Stalin's viewpoint from prior Marxists and why did Stalin adopt it?

None of the great Marxists eschewed the role of universal suffrage, and its' corollary – Parliaments, by whatever name they were called:

The possessing classes – the landed aristocracy and the bourgeoisie – keep the working people in servitude not only by the power of their wealth, by the simple exploitation of labour by capital, but also by the power of the state – by the army, the bureaucracy, the courts.... Universal suffrage provides us with an excellent means of struggle. In Germany, where the workers have a well organised political party, they have succeeded in sending six deputies to the so-called National Assembly; and the opposition which our friends Bebel and Liebknecht have been able to organise there against a war of conquest has worked more powerfully in the interest of our international propaganda than meetings and years of propaganda in the press would have. At present in France too workers' representatives have been elected and will loudly proclaim our principles. At the next elections the same thing will happen in England.

Friedrich Engels to the Spanish Federal Council of the International Working Men's Association, 13 February 1871; in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Selected Correspondence (Moscow, 1975); https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1871/letters/71_02_13.htm

While Lenin's words on 'parliamentary cretinism' are well known, his concept of parliamentary struggle was very nuanced. Thus after the 1905 revolution was crushed, as sops to the working class, elections were held for the Dumas – a representative assembly. Lenin strongly believed it was necessary for the working class to use it to – as an educational and training tool:

"The autocracy has been forced to set up a representative assembly for certain strata of the bourgeoisie, to balance between them and the feudalist landlords, to form an alliance of these sections in the Duma; it has been forced to abandon all the hopes it had placed in the patriarchalism of the muzhik, and to seek support against the rural masses among the rich peasants, who are ruining the village commune...

The autocracy cloaks itself with pseudo-constitutional institutions...

We must get over this stage. The present new conditions require new forms of struggle. The use of the Duma tribune is an absolute necessity. A prolonged effort to educate and organise the masses of the proletariat becomes particularly important. The combination of illegal and legal organisation raises special problems before the Party...

As we have said, utilisation of the Duma tribune is an essential element of this work of education and training...

We must from the very outset organise Social-Democratic parliamentarism in Russia on a different basis; we must at once establish team-work in this field—so that every Social- Democratic deputy may really feel that he has the Party behind him, that the Party is deeply concerned over his mistakes and tries to straighten out his path—so that every Party worker may take part in the general Duma work of the Party”;

V. I. Lenin, 'On the Road'; *Sotsial-Demokrat*, No. 2, January 28 (February 10), 1909; in, Lenin Collected Works, 1973, Moscow, Volume 15, pages 345-355.
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1909/jan/28.htm>

So far so good. Engels, Lenin, and the 1950 Stalin are congruent. And yet, to actually create socialism, these same leading Marxists insisted it was needed to 'smash the state'. By this Lenin reminds us in 'State and Revolution', that this smashing of the state means the destruction of the bourgeois – or ruling class state, and replacing it with the state of the working class.

Naturally times change, and so therefore, must practice:

Marxism requires of us a strictly exact and objectively verifiable analysis of the relations of classes and of the concrete features peculiar to each historical situation. We Bolsheviks have always tried to meet this requirement, which is absolutely essential for giving a scientific foundation to policy.

Our theory is not a dogma, but a guide to action,”(*Engels’s letter to F. A. Serge dated November 29, 1886*), Marx and Engels always said, rightly ridiculing the mere memorising and repetition of “formulas”, that at best are capable only of marking out general tasks, which are necessarily modifiable by the concrete economic and political conditions of each particular period of the historical process.”... “Theory, my friend, is grey, but green is the eternal tree of life.” Mephistopheles, from Goethe’s tragedy *Faust*. Erster Teil, Studierzimmer; Lenin V.I.; 'Letters on Tactics', April 1917; *Lenin Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, 1964, Moscow, Volume 24, pages 42-54.”

Thus if what the 1950 Stalin is saying is indeed different, *why* had he changed the practice? Singh does not explain adequately why Stalin found it necessary to change the formulation, if he has. But failing to be explicit implies simply that “Stalin says so, and therefore this must be right”. Perhaps Singh is not saying this, perhaps he is. But, in any case, we do not feel this lack of clarity is either useful, or does due justice to Stalin. We therefore try to understand why this occurred below.

ii) The failure of organisations of the working class to prevent fascism in Germany;

Singh mischaracterizes the failure of the communist parties to engage with the social democrats and obtain their unity into a United Front. In his version, the *social-democrats* were responsible for a failure of a united front:

The Labour Party in Britain did not tolerate united action amongst the workers against Fascism and war just as *the German Social Democrats had rejected the*

United Front against Fascism and so opened the way to the success of Fascism in Germany. The only way to win power was through a workers' revolution founded upon a united front of the working class around the elementary demands against wage-cuts, high rents, speed-up, wholesale dismissals as well as the fight against Fascism and for colonial liberation.

This is in sharp contrast to the facts, where a communist party led, ultra-leftist insistence on only a United Front from below, sabotaged any chance of a United Front. Singh mis-characterises this ultra-leftist failure, and thereby simplifies the history of the Comintern, only to claim:

... It is evident that this programme conformed to the traditions of Bolshevism and the Comintern of that period.

But in reality, the Comintern advocated policy was corrected **back** to a previous, largely correct United Front approach. Singh does not note the various changes in the Comintern statements. The term 'United Front' - describing how the Communist Parties worked with non-communist workers and organisations, arose in 1921, at a time when Lenin was heavily involved in Comintern matters (Bland W.B: Communist League; No.111: United Front Tactics; <http://ml-review.ca/aml/CommunistLeague/COMPASS111-UNITEDFRONT.HTM>)

The United Front can be defined as follows, and received Lenin's endorsement:

The interests of the communist movement generally require the communist parties and the Communist International as a whole to support the slogan of the united front of the workers and to take the initiative in this matter.

The united front of the workers means the united front of all workers who want to fight against capitalism, which includes those who still follow the anarchists, syndicalists, etc.

Executive Committee of the Communist International: Directives on the United Front of the Workers (December 1921), in: Jane Degras (Ed.): *The Communist International: 1919-1943: Documents*, Volume 1; London; 1971; p. 311, 316.

Lenin urged to the Politburo of the Russian Communist Party:

That the line of joint action with workers of the Second International proposed by a number of communist parties of the Communist International... be approved.

(Vladimir I. Lenin: *Draft Decision of the Politburo of the CC, RCP (B) on the Tactics of the United Front (December 1921)*, in: *Collected Works*, Volume 42; Moscow; 1969; p. 367).

But in the period after Lenin's death, the direction of the Comintern was taken into a dangerous pseudo-left direction. This stated that the 'main blow' must be against 'social-democracy' – not fascism:

The 12th Plenum of the ECCI, in August/September 1932:

"Reaffirmed the need for directing the main blow against Social-Democracy as being the social pillar of the bourgeoisie.

(*Institute of Marxism-Leninism, CC, CPSU: 'Outline History of the Communist International'*; Moscow; 1971; p.329).

At the same Plenum Otto Kuusinen declared:

Social-Democracy still remains the main social support of the bourgeoisie. The main blow... must in the present period... be directed against social-fascism and the reformist trade-union bureaucracy."

Otto Kuusinen: 'The International Situation and the Tasks of the Sections of the Comintern', in: '12th Plenum of the ECCI' London; 1932; p. 105, 141.

Even at the 13th Plenum in December 1933, after the Nazis had seized power, Wilhelm Pieck was still insisting that:

Social-Democracy is fulfilling its task today as the main bulwark of the bourgeoisie.

Wilhelm Pieck: "We are fighting for a Soviet German", in: *13th Plenum of the ECCI*; London; 1933; p. 7.

Indeed, the 'class-against-class' deviation above, expressed the view that the left-wing of Social-democracy (that which supported united front tactics) was "more dangerous" than the right-wing (that which opposed united front tactics).

For example, at the 10th Plenum in July 1928:

The communist parties were set the task of decisively intensifying the struggle against Social-Democracy and especially against its 'Left' wing. . . . Equating Social-Democracy . . . with fascism and advancing the slogan of dealing the main blow against its left elements, who could become the allies of the Communists in the fight against reaction and fascism, was a mistake.

(Institute of Marxism-Leninism, CC, CPSU: op. cit.; p.291).

The German revisionist leader Wilhelm Pieck, later admitted at the 13th Plenum of the ECCI in December 1933 – but only after the imposition of the Nazi dictatorship:

The sole force which could have prevented the fascist dictatorship, or can defeat it, is the German working class united.

Wilhelm Pieck: *'We are fighting for a Soviet Germany'*, in: *'13th Plenum of the ECCI'*; London; 1934; p. 57.

But Singh is correct to say that the overall failures of communists to achieve a successful United Front, directly led to the changes of the Comintern in its later re-application of a largely correct United Front policy:

With the rise to power of Nazism in Germany, the Spanish civil war and the Japanese invasion of China, the CPSU (b) and the Comintern re-orientated their activities to defend the democratic and socialist movement from the onslaught of reaction by the establishment of proletarian and popular fronts against fascism and the war danger which was represented by Germany, Italy and Japan.

Marxist-Leninist theory is not an inflexible line that cannot change. But the ultra-left line in the 'class against class' period, was a deviation outside of the Bolshevik practice. A return to united front policies, was correct. This then brings us to the post-war united front as embodied in the People's Democracies.

(ii) After World War 2 – Defending the areas controlled by the Red Army

Singh goes on to say that the British party programme “became outdated”, and the new British programme was to take:

Into account the new correlation of forces on a world scale... particularly with the establishment of the New Democracies and People’s Democracies in Central and South-East Europe, the Chinese revolution.

Singh; Ibid

But this *understates* the relationship, since in reality, the new situation post-war was *the* cause of the changes to the British programme. It was the situation in Europe that was most germane in our view. Indeed the situation was dramatically different pre and post-war. This new situation contained **two major features**, one positive for world communists, and one negative.

The **positive** feature was that the bayonets of the Red army in Eastern Europe had not only removed fascism, but had directly led to the Peoples Democracies.

The **negative** feature was the dissolution of the ‘Grand Alliance’ forged by the USSR (with the USA and Great Britain) upon the invasion of the USSR by German fascists. In contrast, and against efforts by Stalin and the Marxist-Leninists to maintain this alliance post-war, a new USA led alliance was spawned. This new alliance now spurned its previous war ally (the USSR), and established the Marshall Plan and NATO. Having failed in the original plan to destroy the USSR by open, German fascism, the imperialists adopted a new two-pronged plan: (i) to encircle the USSR and People’s Democracies, while looking for pretexts for open war; and, (ii) to encourage hidden revisionists including Khrushchev and Tito.

It took Stalin and the Marxist-Leninists of the USSR, a little time to re-orientate the movement. This was because they made all attempts to preserve a working alliance, until it became obvious with the Marshall Plan – what the USA in reality intended. The overall strategy of the Marxist-Leninists of the USSR adopted was to preserve the peace, against an increasingly belligerent USA (and secondarily Britain), and to support the People’s Democracies. It is in this light that we should view key events.

During World War Two, the obvious focus for the Marxist-Leninists in the USSR led by Stalin, was to repel the fascist invaders. Britain and the USA, despite making commitments, avoided opening a second front in the West, finding all sorts of excuses. Nonetheless, at huge and unimaginable cost – human and resources – the peoples of the USSR defeated the German fascist invasion. Only after the USSR won the heroic victory of Stalingrad, in February 1943, did the imperialists even remotely plan for landings in France.

In July 1943, the third German summer offensive began, but was defeated by the USSR in August 1943, at the battles of Khursk, Orel, and Kharkov. Meanwhile in July, the USA and Britain landed in Sicily, and then started to enter mainland Italy. By November, the counter-attack of the Red Army began to push the German army back into Europe, and the Red Army crossed the Dnieper and into Poland.

As German fascism was squeezed in the East by the USSR, and in the South through the Mediterranean by the Western Allies, post-war planning came to the fore. The closer

the USSR got towards Europe, the more interested the Western Allies of the USSR became in this.

The Peoples Democracies were established by the conditions of the Red Army As used by Singh, the word 'parliament' suggests, or implies, a substitute - for in particular, armed force. Yet Singh implicitly acknowledges in his examples, that it is *only* when parliament was linked to revolutionary force that change occurred:

The underground parliament of Poland which attempted to lead the armed struggle of the Polish people. In the post-war period the working class forces headed by the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia were able to seize power in 1948 which was facilitated by the strong positions which the party held within parliament.

The Eastern Europe countries listed by A. I. Sobolev (as quoted by Singh), were:

The different countries of Central and South-East Europe: Bulgaria, Albania, Hungary, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, and Poland – the People's Sejm.

Note that it was *only* Albania (and Yugoslavia – which is not cited by Sobolev, in the quote as given in RD) that liberated itself from the fascist clutches, the others needed the Soviet Red Army. Yet, Singh states:

The understanding of People's Democracy elaborated in this period gave no exemption to Britain on the question of establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat under the British Road to Socialism through the path of People's Democracy.

But we have seen (Above, in '1. *The state of the British Communist Party in 1950 and Stalin's advice*') that earlier in 1945, the attempt by Pollitt to adopt a Browder-ite line, was dropped. What explains the changed approach, embodied in the 'British Road to Socialism'?

(iii) Stalin's responses to renewed imperialist pressure after 1945

As Italy came under the USA and Britain, an attempt was made to exclude the USSR from having any say in Italian capitulation. But Stalin rightly, insisted on this ability, as a war ally. The more perceptive Western diplomats saw not only no credible reason to refuse, but also a potential benefit in enabling the USSR to participate in setting terms. For, as British Ambassador to Moscow, Sir Archibald Clark Kerr, wrote to Anthony Eden:

The admission of the Soviet government to our present councils would open the doors to ourselves and the Americans when the time comes to provide for the future of Finland and Eastern Europe;

(David Reynolds and Vladimir Pechatov; "The Kremlin Letters. Stalin's wartime Correspondence with Churchill and Roosevelt": Yale, 2018; p. 294).

Both sides of the wartime 'Grand Alliance', were reserving their 'rights'. Stalin was a shrewd Marxist-Leninist, and an eminent realist. The term 'realpolitik' well applies to him. He wished that the USSR would assist the development towards socialism in the countries its armies had liberated. Yet he also understood the limits of USSR power.

Soviet leaders had already tried to anticipate events after the end of the war:

In November 1944 (a report was written) by Maksim Litvinov 'On the Prospects and Basis of Soviet-British Cooperation'. Litvinov, Molotov's predecessor as foreign commissar, was the head of the Foreign Commissariat's postwar planning commission and he wrote a number of reports during the war speculating on the shape of the postwar world. This particular report envisaged an Anglo-Soviet division of postwar Europe into spheres of security and, according to Litvinov's schema, Greece was allocated to the British sphere along with Holland, Belgium, France, Spain, and Portugal.

O. Pechatnov, The Big Three after World War II: New Documents on Soviet Thinking about Postwar Relations with the United States and Great Britain, Cold War International History Project Working Paper no.13 (1995).

Undoubtedly, the later claims of Winston Churchill that Stalin and he had divided up Europe into "spheres of influence", between them were exaggeratedly false and self-serving (Panos Tsakaloyannis, "The Moscow Puzzle," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (1986), pp. 37–55). Or as Geoffrey Roberts says:

It's a good story, but not necessarily true.

(Geoffrey Roberts; "Ideology, calculation, and improvisation: spheres of influence and Soviet foreign policy 1939–1945"; Review of International Studies (1999), 25, 655–673)

Nonetheless, Stalin had recognised that the British would defend its European interests fiercely – especially in the Mediterranean, and its colonies (*Roberts G; 1999; Ibid*). In response, Stalin and the Marxist-Leninists of the USSR, adopted the overall strategy to 'preserve their communist powder'.

The best conditions for world socialism, were in the central European countries, where the USSR Red Army armed power could physically underwrite the governing bodies. For example, there was no USSR Red Army presence in Greece, thus no direct *external* communist presence in Greece. In contrast, the *external* British army was present. Stalin therefore 'conceded' Greece to British sway, on the understanding that the USSR had comparable sway in the Balkans including Bulgaria. Moreover Stalin had assessed the weakness of the Greek CP military positions, as very likely to fail:

Stalin called: 'I advised not starting this fighting in Greece. The ELAS (i.e. National People's Liberation Army) people should not have resigned from the Papandreou government. They've taken on more than they could handle. They were evidently counting on the Red Army's coming down to the Aegean. We cannot do that. We cannot send out troops into Greece, either. The Greeks have acted foolishly'.

Stalin 10 January 1945; quoted in "The Diary of Georgi Dimitrov 1933-1949"; Edited Ivo Banac; Yale; 2003; p.352-3

Trotskyist writers charge Stalin with abandoning the Greek revolution. Actually, these same persons had attacked Stalin for the interim Hitler-Ribbentrop Pact, which gave the USSR a vital short-term delay of the Second World War. Yet, ignoring the devastating effects on the peoples of the USSR, then the same Trotskyites think the Red Army should have gone to the Aegean. Realists recognise the very real, objective limitations faced by the Red Army. It is tough in the real world, and priorities are needed.

The Soviet strategy aimed at two goals: the continued defence of the USSR, and defending the Peoples Democracies. At the various summits, Stalin's diplomacy strived for this. Largely, he was successful. Hence the verdict of Molotov about the end results of the last of the three great war summits – the Potsdam Conference:

Georgi Dimitrov: "I spoke with Molotov about the [Potsdam] conference, and in particular about decisions affecting Bulgaria and the Balkans. Basically, these decisions are to our [the Communists'] advantage. In effect, this sphere of influence has been recognized as ours." *The*
Diary of Georgi Dimitrov, 1933–1939, Ibid, p. 377.

Meanwhile, Stalin had given way on tough negotiations over Mediterranean countries. For example Greece as discussed above, but also in Iran and Turkey. (We discuss Azerbaijan, and Ja'far Pishevari, Leader of the Democratic Party of Azerbaijan, in 'Theses on Kurdistan Part 1'). Geoffrey Roberts assesses the pattern as follows:

The pattern that emerges... is that, Stalin sought economic, political and strategic gains in Greece, Iran, and Turkey, (but) he was unwilling to jeopardize more important aims in the central European theatre. Stalin's main priority was the maintenance of the Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe, preferably in the context of a peacetime Grand Alliance with Britain and the United States."
Geoffrey Roberts; "Moscow's Cold War on the Periphery: Soviet Policy in Greece, Iran, and Turkey, 1943–8"; Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 46, No. 1 (JANUARY 2011), pp. 58-81

By the time of the earlier Yalta summit, Stalin and Churchill and Roosevelt – had all agreed to the wording of "a democratic Europe based on free elections":

On 11 February 1945 the Big Three met for the final time to approve a communiqué to be issued at the end of the conference. They quickly agreed on the text... issued the same day in the names of Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin. In it they announced their agreed policies vis-à-vis Germany, the United Nations, Poland, and Yugoslavia, and they also promulgated their Declaration on Liberated Europe that committed Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States to the destruction of Nazism and Fascism and the establishment of a democratic Europe based on free elections. In conclusion the three leaders pledged to maintain wartime unity and to create the conditions for a secure and lasting peace.
Geoffrey Roberts, "Stalin at the Tehran, Yalta, and Potsdam Conferences"; Journal of Cold War Studies, Volume 9, Number 4, Fall 2007, pp. 6-40.

But history records that of the three, only Stalin kept to this line. Even during the war, Churchill was adopting bellicose stands against the USSR:

Though the American politicians and the American leadership mostly adhered to the agreements and arrangements that had been made, Churchill's attitudes had undergone a significant transformation. He himself later wrote, "Our countries have lost the common enemy that was almost the sole bond between us" (*Churchill, WS: Second World War, Vol VI, p. 522–529*).

In so speaking, he wished the British and the Americans—both politicians and soldiers—to know that 'Soviet Russia has become a deadly threat to the war', and that 'a new front must be created immediately to stop its expansion. This

front,' he said, 'should be as far to the east in Europe as possible.'

He (Churchill) recommended that the Western Allies take as their main objective conquering Berlin, liberating Czechoslovakia, taking Prague, occupying Vienna perhaps all of Austria.

Michael Reimann, Chapter 10; 'The USSR and East-Central Europe'; in "About Russia, Its Revolutions, Its Development and Its Present"; Peter Lang Publishing; Frankfurt; 2016; 166-7

Nonetheless, Stalin had hoped for a long post-war truce between the West and the USSR. As Stalin said to Benes:

Stalin touched on interference in internal Polish affairs, and Benes translated what he said for Mikolajczyk:

Do you consider us so stupid that we would wish to interfere in Polish affairs?... We just had the Moscow conference, we had the Tehran conference. We want peace for several generations. Do you think we have time to care about such things?

Československo–sovětské vztahy Vol 2, p.213; cited by Reimann Ibid; p. 157.

Yet well before the “several generations” had been raised, Stalin’s hopes were dashed.

After the infamous 1946 ‘Fulton Speech’ (also known as the “Iron Curtain’ speech) made by Winston Churchill in the USA – Stalin publicly changed gear:

Question: How do you appraise Mr. Churchill’s latest speech in the United States of America?

Answer: I appraise it as a dangerous act, calculated to sow the seeds of dissension among the Allied States and impede their collaboration.

Question: Can it be considered that Mr. Churchill’s speech is prejudicial to the cause of peace and security?

Answer: Yes, unquestionably. As a matter of fact, Mr. Churchill now takes the stand of the warmongers, and in this Mr. Churchill is not alone. He has friends not only in Britain but in the United States of America as well... Actually, Mr. Churchill, and his friends in Britain and the United States, present to the non-English speaking nations something in the nature of an ultimatum: “Accept our rule voluntarily, and then all will be well; otherwise war is inevitable.”

J.V.Stalin "Interview to "Pravda" Correspondent Concerning Mr. Winston Churchill's Speech at Fulton"; March, 1946; <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1946/03/x01.htm>

Question: How do you appraise the part of Mr. Churchill’s speech in which he attacks the democratic systems in the European States bordering upon us, and criticises the good-neighbourly relations established between these States and the Soviet Union.

Answer: This part of Mr. Churchill’s speech is compounded of elements of

slander and elements of discourtesy and tactlessness. Mr. Churchill asserts that “Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest, Sofia—all these famous cities and the populations around them lie within the Soviet sphere and are all subject in one form or another not only to Soviet influence, but to a very high and increasing measure of control from Moscow.” Mr. Churchill describes all this as “unlimited expansionist tendencies” on the part of the Soviet Union...

In the first place it is quite absurd to speak of exclusive control by the U.S.S.R. in Vienna and Berlin, where there are Allied Control Councils made up of the representatives of four States and where the U.S.S.R. has only one-quarter of the votes. It does happen that some people cannot help in engaging in slander. But still, there is a limit to everything.

Secondly, the following circumstance should not be forgotten. The Germans made their invasion of the U.S.S.R. through Finland, Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria and Hungary. The Germans were able to make their invasion through these countries because, at the time, governments hostile to the Soviet Union existed in these countries. As a result of the German invasion the Soviet Union has lost irretrievably in the fighting against the Germans, and also through the German occupation and the deportation of Soviet citizens to German servitude, a total of about seven million people. In other words, the Soviet Union’s loss of life has been several times greater than that of Britain and the United States of America put together. Possibly in some quarters an inclination is felt to forget about these colossal sacrifices of the Soviet people which secured the liberation of Europe from the Hitlerite yoke. But the Soviet Union cannot forget about them. And so what can there be surprising about the fact that the Soviet Union, anxious for its future safety, is trying to see to it that governments loyal in their attitude to the Soviet Union should exist in these countries? How can anyone, who has not taken leave of his wits, describe these peaceful aspirations of the Soviet Union as expansionist tendencies on the part of our State?”

J.V. Stalin “*Interview to “Pravda” Correspondent Concerning Mr. Winston Churchill’s Speech at Fulton*”; March, 1946; <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1946/03/x01.htm>

Stalin explains why the influence of the CPs in Eastern Europe and “nearly all countries of Europe which were previously under Fascist rule” – have drawn close to the communists:

Mr. Churchill comes somewhere near the truth when he speaks of the increasing influence of the Communist Parties in Eastern Europe. It must be remarked, however, that he is not quite accurate. The influence of the Communist Parties has grown not only in Eastern Europe, but in nearly all the countries of Europe which were previously under Fascist rule—Italy, Germany, Hungary, Bulgaria, Rumania, and Finland—or which experienced German, Italian or Hungarian occupation—France, Belgium, Holland, Norway, Denmark, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Greece, the Soviet Union and so on.

The increased influence of the Communists cannot be considered fortuitous. It is a perfectly logical thing. The influence of the Communists has grown because, in the years of the rule of Fascism in Europe, the Communists showed themselves trusty, fearless, self-sacrificing fighters against the Fascist regime for the liberty

of the peoples.”

Stalin; Ibid

Stalin’s plan was to ensure that “the millions of plain people stand guard over the cause of peace”:

Of course Mr. Churchill does not like this course of development and he sounds the alarm and appeals to force.... I don’t know whether Mr. Churchill and his friends will succeed in organising a new armed campaign against Eastern Europe after the Second World War; but if they do succeed—which is not very probable because millions of plain people stand guard over the cause of peace—it may confidently be said that they will be thrashed, just as they were thrashed once before, 26 years ago.

Stalin; Ibid

Clearly by 1947, the ‘Grand Alliance’ of the war was completely fractured. The USA used both its economic powers, and the threat of the Atomic bomb (*Alliance 30*) to threaten states not willing to enter its plan to encircle the USSR. Stalin pointed out to Prime Minister Clement Gottwald and Masaryk, the true intent of the Marshall Plan:

Generalissimo Stalin continued: "France herself has no programme for a revival of her economy, she is in a difficult financial situation, and Great Britain is also in dire financial straits and is struggling with difficulties of an economic nature, and in spite of this both Great Powers are trying to put together a programme for the economic revival of Europe. But the main creditor is the USA, because neither France nor England has a kopeck. For these reasons, the Paris plans did not appear serious to the Government of the USSR, and now the Government of the USSR has become convinced on the basis of factual reasons that it is in fact a question of isolating the USSR.

Minutes Of A Visit To Generalissimo J. V. Stalin; On 9 July 1947;

J. V. Stalin, V. M. Molotov, Kl. Gottwald, J. Masaryk, P. Drtina: Heidrich, Horák. In: "Stalin, Czechoslovakia, And The Marshall Plan: New Documentation From Czechoslovak Archives; Karel Kaplan and Vojtech Mastný. Bohemia Band 32;1991; <https://www.Bohemia-Online.De/Index.Php/Bohemia/Article/Download/3501/5382>

In response to this general situation, the Cominform was established in 1945. All this naturally had effects upon the revolutionary practice to be adopted.

Singh points out that at an early stage of the Spanish Civil War, Stalin, Voroshilov and Molotov wrote to Caballero (left social democrat), conceding that the Spanish route to socialism might lie through parliament. Although Singh himself notes the immediate qualification of this statement, reminding Caballero of the experience of the Russian Civil War – it is worth stressing. In the translation by E.H Carr, this letter stated:

“The Spanish revolution is following a path in many respects different from that which Russia had followed. This is due to different social, historical and geographical conditions, and to the different international situation which Russia had to face. It is quite possible that in Spain the parliamentary way will prove more appropriate toward the revolutionary development than was the case in Russia.

We still think, however, that our experience, especially that of our civil war, may

have a certain importance for Spain if one bears in mind the specificity of the conditions of the Spanish revolutionary struggle. That is why we have agreed, responding to your repeated demands...To put at your disposal a number of military instructors..."

"Letter to Largo Caballero, From 'Friends of Republican Spain'," *Stalin, Molotov, Voroshilov*; December 21, 1936; E.H.Carr; "The Comintern, and the Spanish Civil War"; London 1984; p. 86.)

By the end of the war, several similar analyses, stressing the need for united front policies, could be found in Soviet press (cited by Geoffrey Roberts; "Stalin's War"; p.247). It seems to us, that Stalin's perspective was evolving, in response to events. Stalin made several statements stating communists should use diverse and democratic styles of government en route to 'socialism'. For example, in March 1945, Stalin is alleged to have said to Tito:

Today socialism is possible even under the English monarchy. Revolution is no longer necessary everywhere... yes socialism is possible even under an English king". When a member of the Yugoslavia delegation interjected that there was already a Soviet government in Yugoslavia because the communist party held all the key positions, Stalin retorted that 'no, your government is not Soviet – you have something in between de Gaulle's France and the Soviet Union.

Roberts G; "Stalin's War From World War to Cold War, 1939-1953); London; 2006" p. 437; Citing M.Djilas, "wartime"; p.247.

It is true that Djilas can be criticised as a source, and indeed he is always at pains to be self-serving in the cause of Yugoslav revisionism. Nonetheless, this quotation seems to be consistent with other sources. To Polish leaders in May 1946, Stalin said:

In Poland there is no dictatorship of the proletariat and you don't need it there. It is possible that if we in the USSR had had no war the dictatorship of the proletariat would have taken a different character...We had strong opponents... The Tsar, landowners, and strong support from Russian capitalist from abroad. In order to overcome these forces it was necessary to use power, to lean on the population, that is to say dictatorship...Undoubtedly removing the capitalists and landowners in Poland was aided by the Red Army. That is why you have no basis for the dictatorship of the proletariat in Poland. The system established in Poland is democracy, a democracy of a new type. It has no precedent...Your democracy is special. You have no class of big capitalists. You have nationalised industry in a 100 days, while the English have been struggling to do that for the past 100 years. Don't copy western democracy. Let them copy you. The democracy that you have established in Poland, Yugoslavia and partly in Czechoslovakia is a democracy that is drawing you closer to socialist without the necessity of establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat or the Soviet system. Lenin never said there was no path to socialism other than the dictatorship of the proletariat, he admitted that it was possible to arrive at the path to socialism utilising the foundations of the bourgeois democratic system such as Parliament".

Vostochnaya Evropa v dokumentakh Rossiiskikh Arkhivov, 1944-1953 doc 151; cited by G.Roberts, 'Stalin's Wars From World War to Cold War, 1939-1953); London; 2006; p.247

This was seen also in the statements made by Stalin to Gottwald (Czechoslovak communist leader), and to leaders of Bulgaria (*Roberts, Stalin's War; Ibid; p. 248*).

We saw that in 1945, Pollitt himself withdrew the planned programme modeled upon

Browder's openly revisionist platform. We speculate that it was made clear that it was considered unacceptable. Why was it then acceptable in 1950?

It is likely that the situation of the USSR and the People's Democracy in 1950, was perceived to be even further under threat, than it had been in 1945. At the moment, we believe we have to await more clear data from archival sources. Until then we are in the same position of Zhou En Lai. When he was asked his opinion about the French Revolution – his alleged reply was that it was too early to be certain...

Nonetheless, for now, we can conclude that for communists to leap to advising a major **universal** change in the strategy towards the bourgeois state is premature and unwise. This is particularly the case when the bourgeois apparatus has not been severely disrupted and shattered by war, or fascism or both. Furthermore, the relevance of the People's Democratic state approach, to a country without any peasantry – must also be considered at a future date. Finally, the need for the USSR to 'catch its breath', while not being attacked, was a correct strategy.

10 July 2019

“Revolutionary Democracy” and the “British Road to Socialism”

Garbis Altinoglu, July 2019

Here I try to evaluate two recent documents from ‘Revolutionary Democracy’, [The Archival Papers, consisting of files from RAGSPI/ (The Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History) **and** Vijay Singh’s “The British Road to Socialism of 1951: A Programme of People’s Democracy”], especially the latter. When evaluating these documents we cannot be content with taking into account the basic principles of Marxism. We should also take into account the specific conditions and political traditions of the relevant country (Britain), the specific conditions of the Soviet Union **and** the overall situation in the world, that is the worldwide correlation of forces. Let’s dwell on these points.

Differences between The People’s Democracies and Britain

In both texts we see an effort to find similarities between the situation in Britain and the one in People’s Democracies of Central and South-East Europe. We cannot and should not overdo the similarities between the two. There were important differences. What were they?

First of all, although Britain was on the wane, it still was a great imperialist power and had a colonial empire. This was **not** the case for the countries of Central and South-East Europe, most of whom were semi colonies of imperialist powers.

Secondly, almost all sections of the ruling classes of the countries of Central and South-East Europe were entirely discredited due to their collaboration with the Nazis and had to a great extent lost their legitimacy in the eyes of the masses. But this was **not** the case in Britain. Despite the appeasement policy of Neville Chamberlain government (1937-1940), the Winston Churchill government (1940-1945) was allied to the Soviet Union and had fought against Axis powers.

Thirdly, if we lay aside Yugoslavia and Albania, the countries of Central and South-East Europe were liberated mainly through the military effort of the Red Army, the presence of which played a very important factor in the formation of political power in the region.

Fourthly, Communist Parties in the countries of Central and South-East Europe had had a relatively strong mass support throughout the 1930s and 1940s, whereas the CPGB (= Communist Party of Great Britain) had always remained a marginal force in Britain. In the general elections of 1945 it gained only 102,780 votes and 2 seats in the Parliament. These figures were 91,765 and zero seats in 1950 and 21,640 and zero seats in 1951. Its electoral base, which more or less correctly reflected the level of mass support of the CPGB was 0.4 percent of the votes cast in 1945, 0.3 percent in 1950 and 0.1 percent in 1951.

Attitude of Stalin

Stalin and his comrades must have known about all these facts very well, and they must have realized the weakness of the CPGB. Therefore they cannot have assumed the existence of the prospect of a socialist revolution in post-War Britain, although here was a fully developed capitalist society, where the basic contradiction was the one between the big bourgeoisie and the working class. Democratic and parliamentary illusions and imperial prejudices still continued to dominate the minds of the British masses in post-

War Britain. Therefore the subjective conditions, that is the level of political consciousness and organisation of the workers, for a socialist Britain did not exist.

Besides, Stalin and his comrades must have been very much aware of the fact that the US, the main enemy of the workers and peoples of the world, would do everything in its power not to allow the establishment of Soviet power in Britain, even if the subjective conditions for it did emerge. (We do not see this aspect of the problem being tackled in the discussion between Stalin and Pollitt.) And they were definitely aware of the machinations of the US and British ruling classes, who were eager to start a Third - and probably a nuclear - World War to defeat the Soviet Union, overthrow the socialist regime and cancel the great gains peoples of the world had made as a result of the anti-fascist war and resistance. And last but not least, the Soviet Union, had emerged from the rack and ruin of the 2nd World War in a state of exhaustion and needed a breathing space to dress its wounds and reconstruct the economy. Therefore, not to be involved in large-scale wars, to try to isolate the most aggressive imperialist cliques and to promote an atmosphere of peace, even if it was a fragile one became one of the mainstays of Soviet policy after 1945.

Likely Impact on Policy Advice Given to Pollitt by Stalin

What would the implications of such an analysis be for the British communists? What would Stalin and his comrades, aware of the political conditions in this country – have taken into account the overall dangerous situation in the world in general? I believe Stalin and his comrades were for a Britain not subservient to the warmongering activities of US imperialists and their British counterparts. They wanted to see a Britain on relatively friendly terms with the Soviet Union and People's Democracies, a Britain in which revolutionary workers and other toilers were expected to be more influential in the administration of the state, a Britain on better terms with the peoples of its colonies etc. That is why Stalin said in his letter of 28 September 1950 to Harry Pollitt, General Secretary of the CPGB – as cited in the archival papers:

The draft of the Programme (of the CPGB- G. A.) insufficiently underlines the task of the struggle of the Communist Party for national independence of England from American Imperialism. It is necessary to show in the Programme that the English Communists are real defenders of the national interests of the English people...

If you ask me, this is a totally understandable and legitimate stand. BUT trying to derive a theoretical superstructure from this tactical position and to argue for a “parliamentary road” to socialism as Vijay Singh does, cannot be accepted.

Vijay Singh's Approach

In his editorial, Singh says of the “British Road to Socialism”:

The new party programme was not one of establishing a Soviet Socialist Britain but of establishing a People's Democracy in Britain. As one of the sub-headings of the programme states: 'People's Democracy - The Path to Socialism'. It was the *road* to Socialism and so it did not envisage the immediate establishment of Socialism based on Workers' Councils, the immediate establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the destruction of parliament, the civil service, the police, the military, the judiciary and the rest of the bourgeois state apparatus.

Drawing on the experiences of the People's Democracies of Central and South-East Europe the British Road envisaged the utilisation of Parliament and the formation of a People's Government based on the various sections of the working-class movement: Labour, trade union, co-operative and Communist based on a parliamentary majority. In the economic sphere the *road* to socialism envisaged socialist nationalisation and workers' control of monopoly capital and big landed property but not the properties of the small shopkeepers, businessmen, small landowners and farmers in the countryside...

The British Road to Socialism in the editions of 1951 and 1952 does not refer to a peaceful transition to socialism. On the contrary, the programme anticipated that:

In carrying through these decisive measures to implement the democratic will of the people, every effort of the capitalist class to defy the People's Government and Parliament will be resisted and defeated.

The great broad popular alliance, led by the working class, firmly based on the factories, which has democratically placed the People's Government in power, will have the strength to deal with the attacks of the capitalist warmongers and their agents.

One can appreciate the parliamentary illusions of the masses in Britain, which has had a long tradition of parliamentary rule and of parliamentary parties. Singh, however, is grossly exaggerating the role of the parliament and is distorting the concrete facts and the historical experience of proletarian revolutions. This experience has shown time and again that parliament does not and cannot play a central role in class struggle; and, to be able to form a parliamentary majority does not and cannot guarantee the establishment of revolutionary power. If its class interests, class privileges and its class rule are in danger, bourgeoisie will not care a bit about laws, constitution, legitimacy, tradition etc. and will not for a moment hesitate to resort to political violence.

It cannot be said that communists have been and were against the utilisation of bourgeois parliament for revolutionary purposes. However, there are very strict limits to the benefits working in a parliament can bestow upon the parties of exploited classes. Singh cannot and does not even try to explain the mechanism of the transition from the state power of the bourgeoisie to the state power of the working class and of other exploited masses or rather the transfer of political power from the exploiting classes to the exploited ones. He cannot and does not even try to explain how the political power shall be taken from the bourgeoisie and shall be given to the working class.

Talking about the "difficulties" of the transfer of political power from the bourgeoisie to the working class in a parliamentary context, he concedes the fact that he doesn't know how this shall be achieved:

The methods whereby the organised working class would counter and defeat the resistance of the capitalists were not spelt out but it may be reasonably supposed that the methods adopted by the Bolsheviks in the Russian revolution and the Communist and Workers' Parties in the revolutionary process in the People's Democracies of Eastern and South-East Europe and the national liberation war in Greece were not unknown to the CPGB.

According to Singh and to the programme called “The British Road to Socialism” it is possible to form a pro-working class and pro-socialist majority in the parliament and a People’s Government supported by this majority could take socialist measures.

Let’s for a moment forget the fact that the CPGB was and had always been an extremely weak party, which has never had the capacity to establish its hegemony over all working class organisations. And let’s for a moment forget the fact that the Labour Party, the trade union movement and cooperatives had mostly been led by people who had stood against communism, against a socialist Britain and would never have supported socialist measures even if the CPGB had been much stronger. Again, let’s assume that this much stronger CPGB was able to form a clear majority in the parliament and convince other working class organisations represented here, to fight for a “socialist nationalisation and workers’ control of monopoly capital and big landed property” and tried to take other socialist measures. Would the state power of the bourgeoisie, that is “the civil service, the police, the military, the judiciary and the rest of the bourgeois state apparatus” have acted as an impartial arbitrator under such circumstances and stand idly by? Definitely not.

Lenin’s Approach

As Lenin said in his “Theses and Report on Bourgeois Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat”, presented at the First Congress of the Communist International on 4 March 1919:

The main thing that socialists fail to understand and that constitutes their short-sightedness in matters of theory, their subservience to bourgeois prejudices and their political betrayal of the proletariat is that in capitalist society, whenever there is any serious aggravation of the class struggle intrinsic to that society, there can be no alternative but the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie or the dictatorship of the proletariat.

On the International Working Class and Communist Movement, Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House, p. 255

The relevance of the People’s Democracies for Britain

The experience of the People’s Democracies of Central and South-East Europe is only partially relevant for Britain. As I have pointed out above, during the War, the state power of the ruling classes in those countries was destroyed not primarily by the struggles of the workers and toilers of those countries, but by the Red Army. (Anti-fascist partisans and even American and British military too had played a partial role in this struggle.)

So, Enver Hoxha too had a critical opinion about the situation in the countries of Central and South-East Europe, especially about the formation of united workers’ parties by the fusion of communist parties and socialist/ social-democratic parties.

In discussing the crisis that arose during the in-fighting between the Khrushchevite revisionists and the revisionist leaders of the Warsaw Pact parties, Hoxha had pointed out that these various Central and South-East European communist parties had been basically brought in by the inflowing Red Army bayonets, following the Second World War:

...Apart from the Polish party, the parties of the revisionist countries are parties which have not waged the struggle themselves, have not gone through that furnace, irrespective of their self-advertisement as allegedly old parties which have been through the fight. Their experience on this issue — and this is the main issue — is very poor if they have any at all. Moreover, these parties were revived, reorganised and took power thanks to the Soviet Army and the direct aid of the Bolshevik Party and Stalin. This assistance was vital to them, not only because they were re-established materially, but also because it helped them to create political and ideological cohesion in their ranks.”

Enver Hoxha, "The Working Class In The Revisionist Countries Must Take The Field And Re-Establish The Dictatorship of the Proletariat", Selected Works, Volume IV, Tirana, The «8 Nentori» Publishing House, 1982, p. 425.

Hoxha was critical also over the “social-democratic maggot” that was “introduced into the party”:

Later, in such parties as the Polish, German, Czechoslovak, Hungarian and other parties, an organisational, political and ideological union was brought about between the communist, socialist and social-democratic parties. Thus instead of remaining outside, in the front the social-democratic maggot was introduced within the party. The wine was watered down, and now it has turned into vinegar. While Stalin was alive, the social-democratic parties of Cyrankiewicz, (General secretary of the Polish Socialist Party), Otto Grotewohl (One of the founders of the German United Socialist Party -1946), Fierlinger (Chief of the Czechoslovak Social-Democratic Party) kept a low profile, but they were working from within, corroding, demoralizing, and seizing as many important positions as they could. When Khrushchev came to power, of course these elements were overjoyed. Later the separation began, and it was a radical one, since degeneration had become deeply implanted in these parties and these countries. Whereas the Marxist-Leninist Gottwald brought the armed workers out in the streets and made reaction tremble and scurry back into its rat-holes, now the revisionist Dubček has a part of the Czechoslovak working class on his side. This is what happened in Hungary too, but not entirely so in Poland, for the Polish working class has a more revolutionary tradition. But the struggle to win the working class and to arouse it in revolution should be the main objective of every Marxist-Leninist party. There is no and there cannot be proletarian revolution without the working class and without the leadership of the Marxist-Leninist party”.

Hoxha, Ibid, pp. 425-26.

So, at the end of the war, the local ruling classes, most of whom had collaborated with the Nazis were both materially/ physically and ideologically/ morally unable to resist the revolutionary onslaught of the masses. Under these conditions and due to the support the Red Army provided to local Communist Parties, transition to People's Democracies was possible. These conditions simply did not obtain in Britain; neither did they obtain in any other country, be it a semi colony or an imperialist power.

What is more Singh does not really consider the option of a non-parliamentary, that is Commune-type of proletarian political power. This, I believe, is the result of his one-sided obsession with a parliament-centered perspective. For instance he says:

The CPGB programme in 1935 rejected the possibility that capitalism could be ended and socialism established by the election of a majority in the House of

Commons as suggested by the Labour Party as the capitalist class would not permit itself to be expropriated by successive Acts of Parliament...

Historical experience has show that only under exceptional circumstances “capitalism could be ended and socialism established by the election of a majority” in the parliament. So we should consider the viewpoint of the 1935 programme of the CPGB as essentially correct. Besides, Singh should be asked to answer the following question:

If the working class and its allies are able to defeat the armed forces of capitalists and put an end to bourgeois rule, why should they bother to preserve the parliament, one of the apparata of capitalist system?

Singh seems to assume that a parliamentary republic dominated by the working class and its allies is the best form of the proletarian state.

Again, Back to Lenin:

In 1917, in one of his very important articles Lenin, drew lessons from the experience of revolutions of workers and exploited masses. Here he paid attention to the central role of a state of the Commune type; but *not* to parliament and parliamentary republic. In this passage he made a reference to Marx, who had described this sort of state as “the political form at last discovered under which to work out the economic emancipation of labour.” Let me quote the most important parts of this passage of Lenin's:

The most perfect and advanced type of bourgeois state is the *parliamentary democratic republic*: power is vested in parliament; the state machine, the apparatus and organ of administration, is of the customary kind: a standing army, a police, and a bureaucracy—which in practice is permanent privileged and stands *above* the people.

But since the end of the nineteenth century, revolutionary epochs have been producing a *superior* type of democratic state, a state which in certain respects, as Engels put it, ceases to be a state, is 'no longer a state in the proper sense of the word'. This state is of the type of the Paris Commune, one in which a standing army and police severed from the people are *replaced* by the directly armed people themselves...

This is the type of state which the Russian revolution *began* to create in the years 1905 and 1917. A Republic of Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', Peasants', and other Deputies, united in an All-Russian Constituent Assembly of the people's representatives or in a Council of Soviets, etc., is what is *being realised* in our country now...

Marxism differs from the petty-bourgeois, opportunist 'Social-Democracy' of Plekhanov, Kautsky and Co. in that it recognises that during the said periods what is required is a state not of the customary parliamentary bourgeois republican type, but of the type of the Paris Commune.

The main differences between a state of the latter type and the bourgeois state are as follows.

It is extremely easy (as history proves) to revert from a bourgeois republic to a monarchy, for all the machinery of oppression—the army, the police, and the bureaucracy—is left intact. The Commune and the Soviet *smash* that machinery and do away with it.

A parliamentary bourgeois republic hampers and stifles the independent political life of the *masses* and their direct participation in the *democratic* organisation of the life of the state from top to bottom. The contrary is the case with Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' deputies.

The latter reproduce the type of state that was being evolved by the Paris Commune and that Marx said was 'the political form at last discovered under which to work out the economical emancipation of labour.' ”

(*Lenin V*; “*The tasks of the proletariat in our revolution*”, *Selected Works, Volume 6, London, Martin Lawrence Limited, pp. 56-57*)

In September 1928, that is 11 years later Communist International held its Sixth Congress. We read the following in the programme adopted at this congress:

The conquest of power by the proletariat means the violent annihilation of bourgeois power, the destruction of capitalist State machine (the bourgeois army, police, civil-service hierarchy, courts, parliament, etc.) and its replacement by new agencies of proletarian power, which serve primarily as instruments for the suppression of the exploiters.

The October revolution of 1917 and the Hungarian revolution, which immensely enlarged the experience gained in the Paris Commune of 1871, have shown that the most appropriate form of proletarian State power is a new type of State, the Soviet State, differing in principle from the bourgeois state not only in its class content but in its internal structure.

Jane Degras, The Communist International, 1919-1943, Documents, Volume 2, 1923-1928, London, Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1971, p. 492.

It might be added, that Enver Hoxha in his remarks upon the tragic events in Chile, that resulted from Allende's neglect of such issues, touches on Lenin's lessons:

All the programmatic documents which the Western revisionist parties have adopted since the 20th Congress of the CPSU, absolutise the «parliamentary road» of transition from capitalism to socialism, while the non-peaceful road is definitely excluded. In practice this has brought about that these parties have finally renounced the revolutionary struggle and strive for ordinary reforms of a narrow economic or administrative character. They have turned into bourgeois opposition parties and have offered to undertake the administration of the wealth of the bourgeoisie, just as the old social-democratic parties have done hitherto.

The Communist Party of Chile, which was one of the main forces of the Allende government, fervently adhered to the Khrushchevite theses of «peaceful transition», both in theory and practice.

Hoxha E; “*The Tragic Events in Chile-A Lesson for the Revolutionaries of the Whole World*”, *Selected Works, Volume IV, Tirana, The «8 Nentori» Publishing House, 1982, pp. 854-55.*

History has proved, and the events in Chile, where it was not yet a question of socialism but of a democratic regime, again made clear, that the establishment of socialism through the parliamentary road is utterly impossible. In the first place, it must be said that up till now it has never happened that the bourgeoisie has allowed the communists to win a majority in parliament and form their own government. Even in the occasional instance where the communists and their allies have managed to ensure a balance in their favour in parliament and enter the government, this has not led to any change in the bourgeois character of the parliament or the government, and their action has never gone so far as to smash the old state machine and establish a new one.

In the conditions when the bourgeoisie controls the bureaucratic-administrative apparatus, securing a «parliamentary majority» that would change the destiny of the country is not only impossible but also unreliable. The main parts of the bourgeois state machine are the political and economic power and the armed forces. As long as these forces remain intact, i.e., as long as they have not been dissolved and new forces created in their stead, as long as the old apparatus of the police, the secret intelligence services, etc., is retained, there is no guarantee that a parliament or a democratic government will be able to last long.”

Hoxha, Ibid, p. 858.

Hoxha directly cites Lenin here:

Participation in the bourgeois parliament,” said Lenin, “is necessary for the party of the revolutionary proletariat to enlighten the masses, enlightenment which is achieved through elections and the struggle of the parties in the parliament. But to limit the class struggle to the struggle within the parliament, or to consider this struggle as the ultimate, the decisive form, to which all other forms of struggle are subordinate, means in fact to go over to the side of the bourgeoisie, against the proletariat.

(V. I. Lenin, Collected Works, Volume 30, pp. 304-305) (Alb. edition)

Lenin also stressed that:

...the need to systematically educate the masses with this idea, and precisely this idea of violent revolution, is the basis of the entire doctrine of Marx and Engels.”

Lenin cited by Hoxha, Ibid, pp. 859-60

The 1951 British Programme

The new party programme (that is the British Road to Socialism adopted in 1951- G. A.) was not one of establishing a Soviet Socialist Britain but of establishing a People’s Democracy in Britain. As one of the sub-headings of the programme states:

People’s Democracy – The Path to Socialism’. It was the road to Socialism and so it did not envisage the immediate establishment of Socialism based on Workers’ Councils, the immediate establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the destruction of parliament, the civil service, the police, the military, the judiciary and the rest of the bourgeois state apparatus. Drawing on the experiences of the People’s Democracies of Central and South-East Europe the British Road envisaged the utilisation of Parliament and the formation of a People’s Government based on the various sections of the working-class

movement: Labour, trade union, co-operative and Communist based on a parliamentary majority. In the economic sphere the road to socialism envisaged socialist nationalisation and workers' control of monopoly capital and big landed property but not the properties of the small shopkeepers, businessmen, small landowners and farmers in the countryside."

On the 1917 Bolshevik revolution

So, according to Vijay Singh, there are important differences between the October 1917 type revolution and the British Road to Socialism. Here he intimates that the October 1917 type revolution envisages:

...the immediate establishment of Socialism based on Workers' Councils.

This, however, is a misrepresentation of the experience of the Russian revolution and is simply not true. Contrary to the superficial understanding of Singh over the socialist revolution, in March 1916 Lenin had said:

The socialist revolution is not one single act, not one single battle on a single front, but a whole epoch of intensified class conflicts, a long series of battles on all fronts, i. e. battles around all the problems of economics and politics, which can culminate only in the expropriation of the bourgeoisie.

Lenin V; "Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination", Selected Works, Volume 5, London, Lawrence and Wishart, p. 268

Besides the Bolsheviks did NOT and due to the socio-economic backwardness of Russia and especially due to the preponderance of petty commodity production and private capitalism could NOT attempt to immediately establish socialism in Russia. Therefore they did not try to socialize "the properties of the small shopkeepers, businessmen, small landowners and farmers in the countryside" despite the fact that they had to pass through a period of "war communism" 1918 through 1921, whereafter they were obliged to allow a controlled growth of capitalism, which was called NEP (=New Economic Policy.) In fact the property of the majority of the working people of the Soviet Union, that is of the small and middle peasants would only be socialized during and as a result of the collectivization of agriculture in 1929-1933. In November 1922, Lenin said this over the NEP:

...In 1921, after we had passed through the most important stage of the civil war... we encountered a great - I think it was the greatest - internal political crisis of Soviet Russia, which caused discontent among a considerable section, not only of the peasantry, but also of the workers. This was the first and I hope the last time in the history of Soviet Russia that large masses of peasants were hostile to us, not consciously, but instinctively. What gave rise to this peculiar, and for us, of course, very unpleasant, situation? The fact that we had advanced too far in our economic offensive, the fact that we had not created an adequate base, that the masses sensed what we ourselves were not yet able consciously to formulate, but that we, soon after, a few weeks later, admitted, namely: that the direct transition to purely Socialist forms, to purely Socialist distribution, was beyond our strength, and that if we were not able to retreat, to confine ourselves to easier tasks, we were doomed."

"Five Years of the Russian Revolution", Selected Works, Volume 10, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1938, p. 323.

I repeat: Bolsheviks did not attempt to immediately establish socialism in Russia. Nor did they attempt the socialization of “the properties of the small shopkeepers, businessmen, small landowners and farmers in the countryside”. This despite the fact that they had to pass through a period of “war communism”, in the years 1918-1921, whereafter they were obliged to allow a controlled growth of capitalism.

On the other hand during and right after the October Revolution the Bolsheviks had to form a sort of coalition government with some non-communist groups, that is with Left Socialist Revolutionaries and Menshevik internationalists well into 1918. They already had affected an organisational union with Mezhrayontsi in July 1917, despite the fact that this group had occupied a centrist position with regard to Bolshevik-Menshevik controversy.

What is more the Great October Socialist Revolution was accomplished not through strictly socialist slogans, but through the slogan “Peace, Land, Bread”. Upon coming to power Bolsheviks did not hesitate to adopt the land reform and redistribution programme of the Socialist Revolutionary Party and reproduced it verbatim in the Decree on Land, despite their differences with this programme.

Therefore we can say that real life is and shall be much richer and much more complicated than Singh's, and/or anybody's theoretical formulas.

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